Safe with me

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Safe with me

by Azvee

Summary

After killing Will's father, the FBI gives Hannibal custody of a young Will Graham. He's the only possible witness to a Ripper crime, and they are hoping Dr. Lecter may be able to help them catch the Ripper.

(Written as a kinkmeme fill asking for fatherly!Hannibal and child!Will.)

Notes

So this is actually a bit of a double fill. There was another story asking for wee!Will reminding Hannibal of his sister that had it's fill abandoned about two chapters in. It fit in well with this prompt, so there you go. Two for the price of one!

See the end of the work for more notes

The Guest

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal hummed along to the soft music as he tided up the guest bedroom. Today was going to be a very big day for him. Although he would never admit it to anyone, he was nervous. It's not everyday that you take a possible witness to murder under your care after all. It's even less common to do so when you are the murderer. The thought filled him with both excitement and just a hint of fear. He relished the chance to prove the continued incompetency of the FBI agents who have sworn to bring men like Hannibal to justice. They believed themselves capable of catching him, and then hand him the one human being who could lead to his capture.

Hannibal knew that most in his position would have just turned down the offer to take custody of the victim, but he always found it hard to say no to Alana. She was one of the few people who Hannibal could honestly say he enjoyed being in the company of. Besides, he had been expecting her to ask him for several days. Leaving a child with FBI agents swarming around him asking questions and dragging up painful memories was the last thing Alana would ever want a child to experience. Someone calm and understanding would be needed to help the boy adjust to being parentless without the pressure of the FBI harming his fragile psyche. Hannibal had more than enough room to accommodate one more person in his home, and was not under any obligation to report to the FBI.

He paused to look at the file again. William Graham, age 8 was printed on the first page next to a photo of the boy. He was in need of a good haircut and a good meal. Hannibal would see to both. It was his responsibility now. He briefly wondered how long it would take to get in contact with his mother, or even if she had any desire to see her son at all. The file said she had left William and his father about five years prior and hadn't sent them so much as a postcard since leaving. This was what most likely led to a bad case of alcoholism for the late Mr. Graham. Perhaps he had taken to drinking before she left, prompting the sudden departure. The true cause for her departure didn't matter. All that mattered was that in a few hours, Hannibal would have access to the only person who had seen the Ripper and lived.

Even if the offer to take in the young boy hadn't been presented, Hannibal would have found some way to get him. After all, William Graham was the reason Hannibal chose to kill his father.

Will didn't like hospitals. They smelled funny and everyone looked sad there. It was a place where people went to die. Will still didn't know why he was here. He just wanted to go home, but none of the doctors or police officers would let him. They didn't understand that Will needed to go home. He needed to know if what he saw was real. He hoped it wasn't. What he saw in his nightmare seemed to be all anyone wanted to talk about with him. They kept

asking him questions and wouldn't leave him alone until he started to cry or that nice lady made them leave.

Will did like the psychologist lady who came and talked to him. He couldn't ever manage to remember her first name. It started with an A. He knew her last name was Bloom, like a flower. She was the only one who would talk to Will about something other than his dream. Sometimes, she even brought him chocolate. He wanted to trust her, but Will knew that Dr. Bloom was working with the police and that was why she visited him so much. She wanted to know what he saw, but didn't want to upset him. She wouldn't let him go home either. She didn't understand that Will needed to go home. He needed to be sure about what he saw.

Sometimes, his mind played tricks on him. It made him see things that weren't really there, or told him how bad things on the news happened. His father said that he was broken and that was why his mom left them. His dad didn't like it when Will's mind decided to show him something when people were around. He got angry if Will started to talk about how the man on a stranger's newspaper killed three girls or if he started to scream because he could see monsters that no one else could. Will didn't like when his dad got angry.

He could hear voices outside his room. He recognized the rough voice of the man that made him stay in the hospital. He said his name was Jack and Will did not like him. Jack was the reason Will couldn't go home even though he wasn't sick. The Dr. Bloom was there too, as well as a third voice that Will didn't recognize. It sounded strange, like the person it belonged to came from some place far away. The door opened and a group of adults entered. Will recognized Dr. Bloom and Jack as well as an older lady who always carried a briefcase with her. Another man came in as well, dressed in a dark blue suit and a mask of polite concern on his face. All the people that visited Will put on that face. He hated that look.

"Now, William, there's no reason to scowl at us like that." The lady with the briefcase remarked, her face morphing into one of disdain. She didn't like her job, Will could tell. "We're just here to see how you're feeling."

"I told you I'm fine." He relied crossing his arms and staring her down. "And don't call me William." His father called him that when he got mad. Will didn't like being reminded of when that happened.

"Will, would you like to leave the hospital?" Dr. Bloom asked. "If you're ready to leave, I've found a place for you to stay."

The grin that had briefly appeared on his face vanished as quick as it came. "Why can't I go home?"

"You know why, Will. You were the one who called the police." Jack rubbed the spot between his eyes in annoyance. He wanted to understand Will, but he didn't know how. He didn't have the time to learn how. He needed something from Will and he wanted whatever it was as fast as possible. He thought it was very important for some reason.

Will didn't remember calling the police. He didn't remember a lot from the last few days. "I need to go home." Why wouldn't these people listen to him? He needed to see if the monster he saw in his house was real or just in his head.

"Why do you need to go home, William? You keep asking to go there, but you don't ever say why." The briefcase lady was not happy with him. She took out a few pieces of paper and handed them off the the stranger while shooting Will a look that made him shrink in on himself. "I really think that he needs more time here before you send him away with a complete stranger. He's not stable enough to handle such a big change."

The man in the suit bristled at her comments, and Will found himself shrinking even further into his bed. This stranger was the type of person parents warned their children about. He was dangerous. "I am more than confident in my ability to care for young William." He paused before pinning Will under his gaze. "I believe you said earlier that you did not like the name William, is there a more preferable version you would like me to use?"

It took Will a moment to find his voice. No one had asked that, not even Dr. Bloom. She had just assumed it was ok to call him that. It was nice to be asked. "I like Will." Why was it that the man who scared him was one of the only people to treat him kindly?

"Very well, Will it is then." He gave Will a smile that both comforted and frightened Will. "I am Dr. Hannibal Lecter. You may call me Dr. Lecter or Hannibal if you prefer." Will simply nodded, hoping that this Dr. Lecter would find someone else to look at. "I will be taking care of you at my house for a while." Papers were signed as he spoke. Will relaxed slightly when the man's eyes dropped to the papers beneath his hands.

"Can't I go back home instead? All my stuff is there." Truthfully, Will did not have much waiting for him back home. His dad spent most of their spare change on beer and bandages. Will was just looking for and excuse to avoid going to this man's house. He felt that he may never leave it once he stepped inside.

Dr. Bloom sighed before reaching out to put a hand on his shoulder. She stopped when she saw Will flinch slightly. "Will, I'm really sorry, but you can't go home just yet. Your things will still be there later. Right now though, we can get you out of this hospital. I know you don't it here."

"If you don't want to go with Dr. Lecter, there are a few of my men that would be willing to let you stay with them." Jack offered an alternative when he sensed Will's hesitation. He wasn't happy with the idea either. It must have been Dr. Bloom's idea then.

"No!" Will actually yelled while Jack was still finishing the last half of his sentence. As much as the idea of going with this strange man scared Will, he liked the idea of staying with Jack's workers even less. They would spend all their time trying to pry open Will's head to get at what Jack was looking for. "I'll go with Dr. Lecter." This came out as more of a mumble while he tried to vanish from the four pairs of eyes looking at him.

When he looked up, Will expected to find faces full of displeasure, or at the very least surprise. What caught him off guard was a grin on Hannibal's face. "Very well, we'll sort through getting you signed out then. I believe that some nurses will be along in a moment to help." As if on queue; a pair of nurses and entered and promptly began herding the group out the door.

Will wasn't sure if he should be feeling happiness or fear now that he was finally going to leave.

Hannibal had decided that he would eat this social worker later. He had already collected her card and was trying to pick which organs would taste the best with his current selection of wine. He'd need to wait until the threads binding her to him were much less solid. Perhaps within the next half year. No one who treated their charges with such disdain would be missed when gone. Such plans, however, were pushed to the side when Agent Crawford started speaking.

"I know you want to help that kid, Alana, but he's clearly not ready to face the real world yet." He sounded annoyed that Will was slipping ever so slightly out from under his thumb. "You both saw how he was in there. I'm not even sure if he realizes that his father's dead yet."

"Perhaps the fact that young Will has been confined here for so long is part of the reason he is acting so strange. He does not seem to like being trapped in a hospital." A hypothetical counter to Jack's own hypothetical argument. "Besides, I believe that you were eager to send Will home when Dr. Bloom first suggested the idea."

"That was when I thought someone from the FBI would be watching him." Jack already knew he was going to loose this argument, but kept going anyway. "What if the Ripper comes after Will? Do you really think you're capable of fending off a serial killer?"

This got a chuckle out of Hannibal. "I doubt that I shall ever find myself fighting with the Ripper."

Alana wisely picked this as the moment to intercede between the two. "Doctor Lecter is one of the best psychiatrists that I have ever met, Jack. He'll be much better at taking care of a mentally scarred boy than any of your field agents will be. Besides, you're still going to learn what Will knows. This will be best for everyone."

Hannibal's future dinner reappeared with a small bag and a few final pieces of paperwork. "Sign here and date the bottom please." The papers were quickly filed away in the briefcase. "This bag has the items that William was originally admitted to the hospital in. He's your problem now Doc." The bag was unceremoniously handed off to Hannibal, and she took her leave. She was going to make a lovely roast one day.

She returned in a moment, grasping Will's hand in a way that could not be comfortable for the boy. He was dressed in a plain white tee-shirt and some grey sweatpants that the hospital must have had in bulk in some back room. Faded sneakers hid beneath the slightly too large pants. As soon as his hand was released, Will all but ran away from her. He stopped a few feet before Hannibal and hung his head. It seemed his desire to leave had beaten whatever part of him was saying not to trust the man before him.

A kind grin stretched across Hannibal's face as he offered Will his hand. "Shall we go now, Will?"

Chapter End Notes

The rest of this story should be much more fluff. I just felt the need to explain why Will was suddenly with Hannibal.

Shadows

Chapter Summary

Will's first night with Hannibal doesn't go as well as either hoped it would.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The shadows on the wall were talking again. They liked to whisper and curl their smokey tendrils around Will as he slept. They'd invade his dreams and change them into nightmares. Even knowing this, he could do nothing to stop them. It happened almost every night for as long as he could remember. Tonight wasn't going to be any different.

The field that Will had been chasing dogs in dried and turned to ash. He was powerless to stop the scene from melting and changing into the same nightmare he had been having for days. A door stood in the center of an ocean of darkness. Will knew what was behind that door and wanted nothing more than to run as far away from it as possible. But, despite his protesting mind, his body propelled him forward until he saw his hand reaching out to grasp the handle. He held his breath as the door opened, since it would be the last chance he had to breathe for the rest of dream. There was a brief flash of his kitchen before everything filled with blood. There was no where to go, no air left, and Will needed to breath. The boy held onto the precious oxygen in his lungs until his they betrayed him yet again and he sucked in the dark fluid. He was drowning in blood.

Hannibal honed every aspect of his body. A man with his unique past time needed to be in perfect condition if he wished to continue to evade capture. His body was a finely tuned machine, mentally and physically. All his senses were sharpened so that he would always be successful on his hunts. The man's hearing was tested however, when he woke up to a sound that didn't belong with the normal night activities of his home. It took a moment to register that Hannibal had a guest with him, and that was probably the source of the noise. Whatever noise his young charge was making, it was muffled by several walls. Hannibal looked at the clock. 3:17 am. He got out of bed with only the slightest hesitation; curiosity overriding any desire to stay and rest.

His footsteps were silent as he crept down the hall. The mystery noise became more pronounced as he got closer the the guest room. It wasn't until Hannibal was actually outside the door that he could finally place the noise. The sound of sobs poorly hidden behind a pillow was on the other side of the door. Hannibal knocked on the door, although he didn't expect Will to respond. It was the polite thing to do. After waiting what he judged to be an appropriate amount of time, Hannibal opened the door and stepped into the room.

Hannibal found Will curled into a ball on the center of his bed with his head buried in a pillow. His shoulders shook as he tried in vain to silence his cries. Hannibal had been warned that Will may react like this. The staff had been forced to sedate Will at the hospital after he woke up screaming and started tearing at the needle in his arm the first night. Even then he had been a restless sleeper. Whatever night terror the child was facing had a strong hold on him since Hannibal was able to make his way to the bedside lamp without any sort of sign to show that Will knew there was another person in the room with him. It wasn't until the light was switched on that Will jumped and looked around the room.

Wide fearful eyes scanned the room, seemingly still lost in some other realm. Eventually, Will rejoined the waking world and his eyes dropped to the floor. A less observant man wouldn't notice the slight tensing of muscles or the way the boy seemed to shrink in on himself. He was preparing for an outburst of anger for having woken up Hannibal. A feeling of pity, something that until recently Hannibal had thought no longer existed within him, began to form. Anger quickly followed. The anger was directed at the man that had trained poor Will to respond to his anger in such a way. He wished he had taken more time to make the man suffer before his death.

Instead of dwelling on unhelpful thoughts like those, Hannibal reached for that spark of pity that shouldn't be there. "Will, are you alright?" He spoke softly, hoping he wouldn't startle the boy. Will responded with a whimper and clutched the pillow tighter. "No one is going to hurt you here. You are safe here, do you understand that?" He settled on the bed when Will didn't reply. He only flinched when he felt the bed dip under Hannibal's weight.

"I'm sorry." He murmured quickly as the weight on the bed continued to shift. "I didn't mean to wake you. I'm so sorry. I'm sorr-" Suddenly Will found a pair of strong arms wrapped around him, breaking off his string of apologies with a shriek. His body tensed so much that he may as well have turned to stone. He was obviously terrified of what was about to follow.

Instead of a beating, or some other form of punishment, a hand gently rubbed circles on Will's back. Hannibal held him tightly, but not painfully, and began whispering to him in a language that Will couldn't understand. The soft warm tones conveyed what needed to be felt regardless of the language barrier. Hannibal lost track of how long he spent sitting in the bed waiting as Will gradually relaxed in his arms. When he was confident that Will no longer feared for his life, Hannibal tried once again to get him to talk. "Why were you crying, Will?"

Silence stretched out between the pair. Hannibal was about to repeat the question when he heard a reply so soft, the man almost missed it. "There was so much blood." The voice was raw and tinged with sadness that stirred more long dead emotions within Hannibal. This time it was guilt. "It was everywhere, and I was drowning in it. I couldn't breath." A pause. "I'm really sorry for waking you up."

Hannibal wanted to pull Will close to his chest and keep him away from the dark visions that he himself had created for the boy. But, that would no doubt set off another bout of panic within his sleep deprived mind, so he settled for reassuring words instead. "It's alright, I'm not upset with you. You've had a very rough time recently, such things are understandable." He released his grip on Will and was pleasantly surprised when he felt a head rest against him. "Is there anything that I can do to help you feel more comfortable?"

Will paused at the question. He obviously had an answer, but was reluctant to say it. "I want you to feel welcome here, Will. You do not need to feel bad about asking me for anything.

The warmth of Will's small body left Hannibal as Will angled himself away from his face. "I don't like the dark." Self-loathing tinged his voice when he confessed to his fear. No doubt Will's father saw to it to regularly remind Will that boys were not meant to be afraid of such things. Another burst of anger tore through Hannibal at the thought.

"That is a very common fear and is nothing to be ashamed of. Many adults still deal with a fear of the dark. Tomorrow we shall go out and find a light for you if you would like one."

"That would be nice." Will mumbled as he leaned back into Hannibal's solid frame. Hannibal went back to rubbing Will as the occasional shudder still went through his body.

The pair spent the rest of the night like that and were only dimly aware of the sun coming up to chase away the shadows.

Chapter End Notes

That's one down, a million to go!

Lungs and Macaroni

Chapter Summary

Will's not quite sure what to make of Dr. Lecter...or his cooking.

Chapter Notes

It wasn't on the list, but what kid is going to look at a spleen or a heart and not think it's gross? Will is not going to be able to eat everything that Hannibal puts on his plate.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dr. Lecter confused Will. He was sure that the man was hiding something, he's sensed that from their first meeting. But whatever it was, he hide it well. So well that sometimes Will wondered if he just imagined seeing something dark and dangerous behind the man's eyes. But then, he'd look at Will with the most intense gaze, and all those thoughts of danger came rushing back. He knew something about the doctor was off, but he didn't know what. If the doctor was simply a bad man, Will would actually feel much better about his situation.

But he'd never done anything to harm Will, or even show a hint of anger towards him. The man was constantly trying to make Will feel better. He'd taken to leaving lights on in the halls at night, and even bought Will a small night light for his room. When Will woke up shaking and scared, Dr. Lecter was there to calm him and chase away any monsters that tried to escape his dreams. The man never asked about what had happened in his home. He never even mentioned Jack or the police unless Will asked about them.

He wanted to like Dr. Lecter, but his mind said he was dangerous. Will didn't like having to fight with himself about this.

"Are you not feeling well today, Will?" An accented voice cut through the cloud of thoughts in Will's head. "You have hardly touched your food."

Will looked down at the assortment of food that he had decided to shuffle around in an attempt to make it appear he'd eaten more than he had. The doctor liked to cook a lot of weird things. The first night was just sausages, which Will had no problem with. It was the next few days that the food started to get weird. They'd had liver, tongue, and spleen. Will didn't even know you could eat those last two. Tonight wasn't any better. His plate was full of lung and brussels sprouts. He hated brussels sprouts. They were gross.

"I don't feel very hungry today." Will kept his eyes firmly focused on his plate. He knew that Dr. Lecter worked really hard in the kitchen and didn't want to make him mad by saying he didn't like the food. Back home, you ate what was on your plate, or you didn't eat at all. "I'm sorry."

When he raised his eyes, Will found a slight frown on the doctor's face. "You need to eat, Will. Your body is much too thin for a boy your age." Dark eyes seemed to look into Will's soul, and he found he couldn't look away. "Do you not like to food?"

"Oh no, it's not that!" Alarms were going off in Will's head. He didn't want his man upset with him. That would be a very bad thing. He needed to think of something, anything else to say. "I'm just full right now!"

Those eyes continued to hold Will captive. He could tell Will wan't telling the truth. "You do not need to lie to me."

When Will's father caught him lying, or at least thought he was, things didn't end well. Dr. Lecter had trapped him. He'd be angry either way now. This thought gave Will the strength to break eye contact and hang his head. "It tastes funny."

Hannibal couldn't help the small part of him that flared up in anger at the notion that anything he had made wasn't perfect. His meals were more than just food, they were art. He made the unworthy into something beautiful and gave them worth that they never had in life. To insult his cooking was as bad as spitting on his face. However, any embers of anger that had been stirred up were put out just as quickly when Will started to curl into himself, his body attempting to create a smaller target.

"That's alright, sometimes I forget how exotic my food can be. Perhaps I can make you something else to eat. What would you like?" Hannibal spoke softly and put on his most disarming face, hoping to show the child he meant him no harm.

He was rewarded for his efforts when the too small body began to uncurl and wide eyes met his own. "I like mac and cheese." He met Hannibal's eyes with a gaze that was both nervous and searching. It was a look that he found directed his way by young William on more than one occasion. He smiled in return and agreed that that would make for a suitable replacement meal. He than wandered off into the kitchen to ponder the mystery sitting in the other room.

Will was unlike anyone that he had ever met. At times he looked at Hannibal like he knew exactly what he was. A prospect he found oddly appealing. From what he had read from the hospital reports, it seemed as if Will was able to connect with others on a much deeper level than most people are capable of. That meant that Hannibal had to be careful not to let his mask slip even slightly around him. If he wanted to help Will, he needed the boy to trust him. That meant getting rid of any lingering suspicion that had worked its way into his head. Sacrificing the personal pleasure Hannibal got by feeding his kills to guests was a small price to pay if it meant that Will would see him as a source of good intentions instead of bad ones.

Such thoughts were what carried him through the motions of making a dish of homemade macaroni and cheese. While it wasn't up to his usual standards, the meal was certainly much better than whatever processed, boxed brand Will's father no doubt made up. Hannibal brought the plate out to Will, who seemed very interested in the 'Leda and the Swan' painting. He would have to remove that from the dining room for a while, it was not very appropriate for children.

Seeing Hannibal approach, Will once again diverted his gaze towards the floor. The increasingly familiar feeling of anger towards the late Mr. Graham was pushed aside as the plate of lung was traded for noodles and cheese. The unwanted plate was set on the kitchen counter for later consideration. Hannibal returned to the dinning room to find the replacement meal already half gone. Will eagerly met his eyes this time with the first real smile Hannibal had seen him make. "Thank you so much, Dr. Lecter. I've never had mac and cheese this good ever!"

Hannibal couldn't help but smile back. He promised himself that he'd bring out more smiles from Will while he was here. Will was worth the effort.

Chapter End Notes

So, I think that using my Godlike writing powers to have Hannibal make up some macaroni was a good use of my time. I'd just like to think that Will (any version) is probably the only person who can say something bad about Hannibal's cooking and not end up on the dinner table.

If you want to drop any thoughts or ideas off with me, leave a comment or find me on tumblr!

azvee.tumblr.com

Dinner Pary

Chapter Summary

Jack wants to know if Will remembers anything about the Ripper. Hannibal is not happy.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The sounds of Beethoven filled the kitchen as Hannibal prepared tonight's meal. There was to be a small gathering tonight. Agent Crawford had been contacting Hannibal for the last week in an attempt to see if Will had shared any information about his father's death. As much as Hannibal would have liked to ignore the him, circumstances prevented that. So, he decided that having the agent over for a meal would be a good way to gain a brief respite from the man. Alana Bloom would also be in attendance since she had been asking about how Will was adjusting. He hoped that she would be able to keep Jack Crawford from badgering Will too much.

As he finished mincing some vegetables, Hannibal glanced over his shoulder to see if the stool that he had recently placed in the kitchen was occupied. Will sent him a small smile from atop it. After Will's first night in Hannibal's home, he had caught the boy trying to sneak into the kitchen while he worked. He had claimed that it was because he wanted to see what was being made, but Hannibal thought that Will was trying to see if his mask would slip while cooking. Whatever the true reason was, a stool was added to one of the smaller chopping tables should Will ever have the desire to watch. It had taken a few days, but after preparing the impromptu meal of macaroni, Will had taken to watching nearly every meal Hannibal made.

Oddly enough, he didn't mind the audience. Most people were an intrusion on one of his most sacred parts of both his house and his life. Will it seemed, was one of the rare exceptions to that rule. He didn't try to interrupt Hannibal's concentration on the food, he seemed to view it as an art form just as Hannibal did. Hannibal found himself explaining little things about the meal to Will. The differences between basil and bay leaves, or why he was baking their meat instead of broiling it. Will listened to him with a look that spoke of a new world being opened up to the child. Judging by what Hannibal had learned of his previous home life, cooking most likely was a new experience for him.

Tonight, there would be no impromptu lessons. He had a schedule to follow, and to keep a guest waiting would be unspeakably rude. Instead, Hannibal returned Will's smile and went back to work. As Beethoven's ninth symphony reached a crescendo, a feeling of absolute contentment settled over him. He hoped that tonight's dinner would not spoil his mood.

His guests arrived right on time. He cast a quick glance at Will before going to the door. The boy was not happy about the prospect of seeing Agent Crawford again; something that Hannibal was glad to see. The less they interacted, the better things would be for everyone involved.

Jack Crawford greeted Hannibal with a firm handshake and a bottle of reasonably priced wine. "Thank you for having us over, Doctor Lecter. I was beginning to think you'd forgotten about us." He stepped aside to allow Alana to make her way in as well. She had two small bags with her.

Alana gave Hannibal a warm smile. "I hope you don't mind that I brought a few of Will's things with. The investigation team is finally starting to release personal belongings." This was followed by a slightly accusing glance towards Crawford. He either didn't react, or didn't notice. The second seemed more likely as Will had finally entered his line of sight. Both Jack and Alana greeted Will with smiles.

"Hello, Agent Crawford. Hello, Doctor Bloom." Will responded in the toneless voice that children often use when being forced to talk to someone they'd rather avoid.

"It's good to see you again, William." Jack said with a smile still in place. He'd managed to maneuver past Hannibal, who had positioned himself between the pair. "Are you feeling any better?" He got a small nod. "Good. That's good. A change of scenery always helps out."

"If you would allow me to take your coats, I would be more than happy to escort everyone to the dinning room. The roast pork has just finished cooking, and I must have you try some before it starts to cool."

Dinner was a very nice, if not slightly formal affair. The roast of a particularly annoying solicitor brought sounds of delight out of all Hannibal's guests. Plenty of comments about his cooking prowess were given, but none quite seemed to beat the way Will's eyes lit up as he put the first bite in his mouth. Soft music and light conversation carried the meal and helped put Will more at ease. The relative peace held until Hannibal went to dispose of the plates.

Jack leaned forward on the table and tried to catch Will's eyes. "So, have you remembered anything about the night you called the police yet?" He didn't have time to be anything but blunt when the Ripper was involved.

"Jack! I thought we agreed to see how Will was before you started to interrogate him." Alana was clearly not pleased by Jack's lack of finesse and quickly turned to look at Will. "I'm sorry, Will, you don't have to answer that question." She met the glare that Jack was giving her with one of her own.

Will shifted uncomfortably in his chair as the two adults stared each other down. "I ummm...don't remember much. If I could just go home for a little while I might be able to..." Whatever thoughts he had were cut off as Hannibal reemerged from the kitchen. Will sent him a pleading look.

"Perhaps Doctor Bloom could show Will what she has managed to retrieve from his house." Hannibal was pleased by the look of thankfulness that both Will and Alana sent his way. He liked knowing that he had the superior numbers in this fight. Hannibal didn't say anything as Alana and Will exited the dinning room. He didn't speak until he heard the closing of Will's bedroom door. Confident that they would not be heard, he turned his attention back to Jack.

"I know you want to find out what Will saw that night, but now is not the time to ask." He towered over Jack as he spoke, hoping that his words may carry more meaning that way.

Jack stood up as well in an attempt to give his words more authority. "And just when do you think a good time would be? After the next victim turns up? There are lives on the line here, and that boy could be the key to finally nailing this bastard."

"That boy could just as easily become a victim."

Jack went on, undeterred by the idea. "The Ripper has never left a witness before, there's got to be a reason."

A frown creased Hannibal's face. He needed to abort that train of thought. "I wish to help you in your investigation, Agent Crawford. The Ripper is a very dangerous man. But, I will not condone causing any further trauma to William's already fragile mental state."

"I believe the kid is stronger than you think."

Frustration began to break through Hannibal's usually calm demeanor. When Will was involved, it was harder to remain impassive about the situation. "The medical records I received show that Will had been abused by his father, but no one seems to know for how long. He is frightened by the slightest touch and is constantly worried that displeasing me will result in some form of punishment. I am trying to show Will that those ideas are wrong, and now you wish for him to meditate on the night he saw his father butchered. Putting such strain on a young developing mind can have terrible and very permanent consequences, Agent Crawford."

"You sound as if this were a personal matter, Doctor." An accusing air accompanied Crawford's reply.

Anger filled Hannibal yet again, but he did nothing to hide his displeasure this time. His voice turned to ice. "The boy has just seen his father murdered before his eyes. The same man who beat and abused him for an undetermined amount of time. He has no one left to turn to, and you personally asked me to look after him. I fail to see how this could be anything but personal." He forced himself to reign in his darker desires for the time being. It would do no good to have any harm come to such a valuable asset, no matter how much pleasure hurting the man would bring. For now, Hannibal decided that he had officially overstayed his welcome.

Jack Crawford was shown to the door as soon as Alana reappeared in the main hall. Hannibal noted that Will did not exit his room. Hannibal chose to interpret that as a good thing as he ushered his guests out. He bade Alana farewell only after she promised to come over for meals more often. His send-off for Jack was much less warm. The man made Hannibal agree

to bring Will in for a brief questioning about his father's murder in three days. He would have preferred to keep Will away from the man for as long as possible, but agreeing was the fastest way to get Agent Crawford to leave.

Hannibal allowed a small sigh of relief to escape when the door finally closed. He walked to Will's room and found the door wide open. Will was sitting on his bed looking through the small pile of personal belongings returned to him. A worn down stuffed dog sat by his side. He knocked on the door and ignored to way Will jumped as the sudden noise interrupted the child's thoughts.

"I was wondering if you would like some chocolate cake." He had planned to serve it at the dinner, but thought better of it when he heard Jack try to pry information out of Will. "I have a few cakes in the kitchen if you would like to join me."

Will gave him an appraising look, still trying to find out what Hannibal hid behind his mask. Not seeing any cracks in it, Will nodded and hopped off the bed. He stopped in front of Hannibal and let the man lead the way into the kitchen, even though the boy had proven to have memorized the layout of the house already. Four miniature cakes sat on the counter, still waiting to be presented to guests that had already left. Will quickly appeared with his stool and a fork.

Hannibal was about to comment on the unspoken rule that people did not eat in his kitchen, but Will let out an appreciative hum as he took a bite of one of the cakes. He decided that once again, Will was the exception to the rule. He grabbed a fork and joined Will by the counter.

Chapter End Notes

I don't hate Jack, I swear, I just feel that he sort of sucks when it comes to the Ripper cases.

Monsters

Chapter Summary

Will's first questioning by the FBI goes about as well as imagined.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Thank you for agreeing to this, Doctor." Agent Crawford helped himself to another bite of sandwich. "I know you want to watch out for the kid, I do too, but we don't have time to be gentle."

Hannibal gave him a polite smile and idly thought of what the man would do if he learned the true contents of the chicken sandwiches he had brought the team of FBI agents. "I think that there is time enough for both."

"Well, we're just going to have a professional disagreement on that then." A noise of pleasure escaped Jack's mouth. "This is by far the best sandwich I've ever had. You may have missed your true calling when you went into therapy instead of cooking."

"Perhaps, but I would get much less pleasure out of my hobby if a paycheck were involved."

The Agent considered that for a moment. "True. But the rest of the world is really missing out. If Bella could cook like this, I'd be twice as large as I am now!"

Hannibal eat a bit of his own meal before turning his attention to the wall behind him. It was full of images of the Graham family and house. He took a moment to appreciate the image of Will's father spread out across his kitchen floor. The camera caught the lighting quiet nicely. "So, do you have any guess as to how long your men will be keeping young William?" He would have to see if there was any way to get a copy of that photo. Perhaps he could obtain a file under the guises of offering his analysis of the killer.

"I'm not sure, it really depends on Will. If he's as talkative as he was at the hospital, we could be here awhile."

Hannibal sighed, wishing that the man's interest in Will would wane faster than it was. At least today's conversation was polite. Putting on his most convincing face, Hannibal set about trying to get a case file on the crime scene.

Will did not want to be here. He'd been dreading the unavoidable trip back to all the men in uniforms asking questions he didn't have answers to. It wouldn't have been so bad if Dr. Lecter hadn't been the one to bring Will to be questioned. It was a breach of the fragile trust he'd formed with the therapist. He didn't even stay with Will after they'd entered the uninviting building. He'd handed Will off to a pair of men he'd never met before walking away with Jack. The traitor.

"Look kid, this is going to go much faster if you talk to us." The man on the left sighed. He didn't look like he'd slept in a while. At least, not in his bed. Which was weird since he wore a wedding ring. They must be fighting. Whatever problems he was having were being carried into work with him. He did not want to be here.

"Why aren't you sleeping with your wife?" Will asked instead. If he wasn't going to have a good day here, neither were these guys. "Did you make her angry?"

His partner nearly choked on his drink. He was much older than either Jack or the man to his left. He'd been around much longer than both men and was going to work until the day he died. He didn't know what else to do with himself. "Jesus! Where'd a question like that come from?"

"Shut it, Frank." He other man snapped. His face was flushed red now. Maybe making him angry wasn't the best idea Will thought belatedly. He'd seen that look on his dad more than once. It never ended well for him. "That is not the reason we are here. Now, are you going to actually answer our questions or is this going to be done the hard way?"

"Alright." Will tried his best to pretend he didn't care that the eyes looking at him belonged to a man who wanted to hurt him. He did a good job apparently, since those eyes narrowed in annoyance.

"Good, now Frank is going to ask you a few questions, and I'll write down anything useful. Got it?"

Will nodded and gave Frank his full attention, hoping that the other man would fade from existence that way. To his credit, Frank recovered from spitting out his drink faster than most people would. "Calm down, Paul. The kid didn't mean anything by it." He sighed before turning to Will. "Ok, we're just going to see if you remember anything about what happened. We'll start with the phone call you made. Do you remember who you called?"

"The police." That was a dumb question, Will had been told many times who he had called that night.

"Good." Frank seemed much more enthusiastic than Will thought a man asking about a murder should. "Now, can you remember anything about why you did?"

"There was...I saw..." Will didn't want to talk about that. "I think I saw something in the kitchen. It's hard to remember."

Paul was not pleased by the response. "Look, we don't have time to screw around here. If we don't catch this guy, more people are going to die. If that happens, it'll be your fault for not

telling us what you saw. Do you want more people to die?"

Will shook his head and looked at the older man for help. He sighed again and took another drink of his coffee. Will was on his own it seemed. "I don't want anyone to get hurt. Everything that night is just blurry."

"Well, maybe these can clear things up." Paul slapped down several photos on the table. "See if these jog your memory." Will looked at the images from his home.

Now Frank was spurred into action. "Knock it off, Paul! He's just a kid. You don't show that sort of thing to a kid." Will continued to stare at the photos as the men argued.

He didn't want to talk about it. Why couldn't everyone just leave him alone? He shook his head hoping that the men would understand. Everything started to blur together and the room began to shift. Flashes of memory played before him. There was a man holding his father as blood pooled on the floor. The shadows in the room grew longer and came alive. They wrapped around the men and started to change them into beasts with long claws and fangs. They didn't seem to notice the change, or the way Will's father uttered his name and held out a trembling hand towards him. He scrambled back out of his chair, sending it crashing into the swirling darkness around him.

One of the creatures turned towards Will then. It let out a sound that reminded Will of glass breaking. He pressed himself against the wall as it advanced with a knife in hand. "Stay away!" He yelled at it. The thing paused for a moment before coming at Will again. It's clawed hand sunk into his arm, piercing the flesh and sending dark red lines down his sleeves.

Will screamed.

Both Jack and Hannibal heard the scream. It would be hard not to it was so shrill. Hannibal was on his feet in an instant and making a beeline for the room Will was in. A feeling of dread curled around the man. For the first time in decades, he felt fear for another human being. He ignored the small crowd that had gathered outside the door, as well as Jack yelling at them to get back to work, and threw the door open.

An older man had his hands wrapped around one of Will's arms as he clawed at it in an attempt to get away. Another stood in the corner swearing repeatedly as blood welled up in his palm. He looked like he was about to murder Will. Will didn't register the crowd that was now yelling to try and find out what had happened. His mind had taken him someplace very far away. Hannibal knew the feeling.

"You will let go of the boy now." His voice left no room for argument. The old man was happy to release the creature that had been carving bloody lines into his arms. As soon as he was set free, Will bolted for the door, but was grabbed by Hannibal before he could make it. "Shhh, it's all right now. No one will harm you. You are safe. You are safe." Hannibal

wrapped his arms around the child and sat on the floor, pulling Will into a hug. He stroked his head and whispered reassurances over and over.

Will was lost in a world full of monsters. They were trying to drag him into the darkness and hurt him. No matter how hard he fought the beast that was holding him prisoner, it wouldn't let him go. Tears of frustration and fear began to well up, but he refused to let the monster see him cry. He wouldn't let it know how scared he was. Suddenly, a new creature appeared and grabbed Will by the waist before shifting its body to drag Will down into oblivion. Panic was about to take over again when he found steel arms wrapping around him again, ready to crush him.

Something changed then. Instead of death or something worse, he heard Dr. Lecter's voice cut through the chaos around him. The monster slowly faded into a man trying his hardest to keep the rest of this world away from Will. A soft hand ran through his hair while the doctor whispered words of comfort to him. Will stopped trying to break free of the man's grip and buried his face in his chest instead. He let his tears fall then.

Will didn't know how long he stayed like that, but he didn't really care how long it was. Dr. Lecter kept the creatures around him from harming him. The one that he had stabbed with a knife earlier tried to speak to Will, but the doctor chased it away. Will felt the man's grip tighten around him and saw a look that said he would kill the first one who tried to take Will from him. The dangerous shadow that Will kept seeing hidden away in the man was very easy to see now, but it no longer frightened Will. Dr. Lecter would only hurt those people who were going to try and take Will from him. He felt safe with him. The doctor would keep away anything trying to hurt him.

Hannibal knew the moment Will recognized him through whatever haze was clouding the boy's mind. He held the boy as he sobbed into his chest and cooed calming words into his ear. Eventually, one of the men who had been interrogating Will decided to approach the pair. Will seemed to sense this and clutched tighter at Hannibal and whimpered.

"Do not come any closer." His words were short and sharp, demanding to be obeyed.

The agent clutched his palm and had the audacity to challenge Hannibal. "That kid is crazy, look at what he did to my hand! He needs to be locked up. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to get something to wrap this in."

Hannibal saw red. How dare this pig insult *his* Will. "You are not to move from that spot until I see to it that Will is ready to leave as well." Images of the many ways he would draw out this man's death danced before his eyes as he tightened his grip on Will. "I'm here to see to it that Will is able to help you. He is the best chance you have to catch the Ripper and you sent

him into hysterics. If you had any level of competency, this would not have happened. Now, either you stand right there until you are given permission to move, or I will do everything in my power to have you fired." He didn't try to keep his mask in place as he spoke. He wasn't sure what emotion was displayed on his face, but whatever was being shown froze both of the agents in the room. Satisfied that they we not going anywhere, he turned his attention back to Will.

Eventually, Will managed to pull himself together enough to ask about leaving. Hannibal smiled and pressed a kiss on the top of Will's head. "Of course, Will. You have spent more than enough time here."

He moved to stand up, but found Will had grabbed his wrists. "I don't think I can stand..." Fresh tears threatened to spring forth after admitting his weakness.

Hannibal's heart ached at the sight. "Oh my poor Will, this has been a very long day for you. You must be exhausted." He paused for just a moment to gather the young body in his arms before making an exaggerated show of lifting Will. In truth, he had carried much heavier loads than the still too light boy in his arms. But, the members of the FBI certainly didn't need to know such things. "We can go home now." The strain of the day seemed to be rapidly draining what little energy Will had left, as he nodded and rested his head on Hannibal's shoulder. Hannibal easily parted what remained of the crowd outside the door and carried Will out the building.

Hannibal did not let go of Will until he was safely placed in his car. Only then did he turn to face Agent Crawford. He stood between the two, adding a second barrier beyond the car door. "I believe that Will has had enough excitement for the day. I will be taking him home now."

"We need to talk about what just happened in there." An accusing tone tinged the Agent's voice.

Hannibal saw red yet again. "What just happened in there was your men pushing an abused child into a panic attack."

"He stabbed one of my agents with a pen!"

"I would recommend you fire that agent. If that is all it takes to bring the man down, he's clearly not meant for work with the FBI." He wanted to get his Will as far away from this man as possible. Perhaps it would have been better to have simply taken Will the same night he had killed his father. "Will is going to be of no further use to you today. He is emotionally drained and will probably end up sleeping for the rest of the day."

"This isn't a joke, Doctor. I think we may have removed Will from the hospital too soon. He clearly wasn't ready to face the real world again."

"What are you suggesting?" Hannibal asked slowly. He did not like the direction the Agent's thoughts seemed to be going in.

Jack chose to ignore the dark tone that Hannibal was using. "I am suggesting that Will stay somewhere better equipped to watch him. Clearly he isn't recovering with you. There are plenty of organizations dedicated to that."

A wave of possessiveness washed over Hannibal. This man wanted to take away his Will. That would not be allowed. "I believe that Doctor Bloom thought such institutions would only affect Will in a negative manner. Changing his environment right as he is starting to adjust would set back his recovery even further. His attack today was because he had not been given adequate time to recover before you thrust him back into a world he had been trying to escape from. Allow Will more time to distance himself from the crime and you may finally get the answers you are searching for." He had no plans on helping Will remember that night, of course, but there was no reason to let Jack Crawford know that.

Agent Crawford seemed to consider Hannibal's words. His shoulders slumped a bit, signaling that Hannibal was the victor this time. "Alright, trying to fight one shrink is hard enough, I don't need two of you yelling at me. Just keep me updated on how Will's doing. If he remembers anything, I want to be the first to know."

Another polite smile graced Hannibal's face. "Of course. Now, I really must get Will home." Jack left the pair somewhat reluctantly and headed back to sort out the mess in his building. Hannibal turned away from the FBI headquarters and got in the other side of the car. He put on some soft music before pulling out of the parking lot. At the first stoplight, Hannibal looked over to see Will already falling asleep. He allowed a brief smile at the sight. "I imagine you have had more than enough time to see what was hidden beneath my mask. You have finally seen how dangerous I can be. I wonder if it bothers you."

If Hannibal hadn't had such sharp hearing, he would have missed Will's sleepy reply. "I don't care, you keep away the monsters."

Chapter End Notes

Will getting carried by Hannibal: Check
Hallucinations: Check
Crying and hiding his face in Hannibal's clothing: Check

Gifts

Chapter Summary

Will isn't feeling well. Lucky for him, there are people around to take care of him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal was in the middle of a book when he heard the slight creak of floorboards. He paused in his reading to listen. Sure enough, another creak was heard. He'd taken to renovating much of his home and office so that if a person didn't know where to step, they could not walk silently through the building. He closed to book with a sigh; perhaps he'd try finishing it another day. "If you keep trying to sneak out, I may end up locking you in your room, Will." Hannibal got a sneeze as a response.

Turning around, Hannibal was met with the sight of Will standing in the doorway of the study looking quite miserable. The boy was dressed in his recently reacquired t shirt and plaid pajama pants with a blanket draped over his shoulders. Peeking out from on top was a very disheveled head of hair and a bright red nose. A mixture of surprise and disappointment were all over his face.

"How'd you know I was there?" A slightly stuffy voice asked.

"Because it is my job to watch you. Now, back to bed."

"But it's so *boring*. Can't I stay with you for a while?" Will drew out the word boring, as if to make a point. He shot Hannibal a grin as well, knowing that the man enjoyed his company.

Hannibal gave a smile in return before placing a hand on Will's back and ushering him back down the hall. "A person should not be exerting themselves when sick. It is best to try and get plenty of rest instead." He was pleasantly surprised to find that after seeing behind his mask, Will was not frightened by what he had seen. It seemed the opposite was true. Will seemed to trust Hannibal much more now that he knew what was being hidden. The boy seemed to have come to some internal decision about the man and his level of trustworthiness. Whatever the reason was, Will no longer shied away from him and Hannibal was grateful for it.

"I was just going to get something to eat. Can't I at least get some food out of the kitchen?" Will met Hannibal's gaze with hopeful eyes. Hannibal was quickly learning that he had a very hard time saying no to anything Will requested when he looked him in the eyes. He wondered if all children had this power, or if it was unique to Will.He would need to work on building some form of resistance towards those eyes.

"The last place a sick person should be is the kitchen. If you would like, I shall bring your lunch to you." Hannibal pulled back the messy covers of Will's bed as he spoke.

Will frowned before getting into bed. "I still don't get why I'm sick. It's summer, people don't get sick in the summer."

"I believe you are suffering from a stress cold. You have had several eventful days, so it's understandable. Now, try to rest while I prepare you something to eat." Hannibal tucked Will back into bed and made his way to the kitchen.

He put on 'Ballade pour Adeline' as he entered. The music flowed over Hannibal as he lost himself in the task of cooking. A simple soup would more than suffice for today. Using real chicken meat, he set about cleaning off any excess fat while a pot of water worked its way to boiling. The music cycled to the next song on the CD, and life was good. Hannibal had finally gotten Will to relax around him, and he could exploit his new connections at the FBI to ensure he was never caught. Hannibal would lead the fools there on a merry chase down every possible path except the one leading back to him. It would provide him with endless amusement to see the men and women there run around in circles looking for a killer that was standing right next to them.

Hannibal had just finished pouring a bowl for Will when he heard a knocking on his door. He wasn't expecting anyone today. Curious, he went and opened the door. Alana Bloom stood on the other side of the entrance with another bag with her. There were several wrapped packages within. He greeted her with a pleasant smile. "Miss Bloom, it is good to see you, although I must admit I am surprised by your visit. Please come in."

A grateful smile came over her features. "Thanks. I know I should have called you ahead of time, but I heard Will wasn't feeling well and thought he could use some extra company. I got him a few things to keep him busy while he's resting." She gestured towards the bag. "Is it alright if I see him for a bit?"

"Of course you may. I was just about to bring him something to eat. I am sure he would love the company." Hannibal retreated to the kitchen and grabbed the tray before leading Alana to Will's room. The child had once again shoved the covers off of himself and was absentmindedly turning the lamp by his bedside on and off. He quickly snapped out of his daze as Hannibal set the tray of food down on a small table in the room.

"Dr. Bloom, what are you doing here?" He glanced at her before locking onto the bag. "Is that more of my stuff?" Will slid off the bed and wandered over to the pair of psychiatrists.

"Hey, Will." Alana was all smiles for the boy. "I heard that you were feeling bad, so I went out and got you a few things." She pulled out one of the chairs at the table and took a seat in the one opposite it. "Why don't you get something to eat before going through these."

Hannibal felt a bit upset that Alana had taken the extra seat, leaving no where for Hannibal to sit, but he decided it was for the best. Alana didn't seem to have any ulterior motives for her gift giving, and Hannibal knew that Will was eventually going to need to learn to talk to others. He retreated to the study to continue his reading, but while also listening to the voices drifting out of Will's room.

"So, I noticed that you kept a little friend with you." Alana's sweet voice was the first to break the silence along with the rustling of wrapping paper. "I thought that maybe he could use some company."

The covering on the package was torn off and Will's voice chimed in. "Thank you! I don't usually get many gifts, and I'm sure Charlie will love a new friend!" A brief pause. "Does he have a name?" Hannibal assumed that Alana had gotten another stuffed dog for Will. This one was no doubt in much better shape than the old beaten Collie toy Will already owned.

"Only the owner gets to pick the names."

Will sneezed before going into what Hannibal presumed was silent contemplation for a minute. "I think...Winston. He looks like a Winston to me." A bit of jealousy hit Hannibal at the happiness he heard in Will's voice. The child must be beaming right now, and someone else was the cause. It was illogical, but Hannibal wanted to be the one that caused Will to feel that joy. He reigned in his emotions as best he could and continued to eavesdrop.

More digging around in Alana's bag. "I don't know if Doctor Lecter had a place to watch these, but I brought a few movies I thought you might enjoy over as well." Hannibal was offended that Alana would think he didn't own a television. True, he hardly ever used the thing, but it was a part of the modern world and he needed to stay caught up with that world.

"Oh wow, is that Harry Potter?" Will's stuffy but enthusiastic voice filled the house as he took in the gifts given to him. Hannibal knew that Will didn't have much, his father had obviously spent most of their money on his drinking habit. These gifts were probably more than he had gotten in the past few years combined. Hannibal wanted to be the one to make Will happy.

A giggle came down the hall, Doctor Bloom probably felt almost as much joy as Will did at the moment. "Yeah, I thought you might be a fan. I got you the first three books and the DVDs as well. They ought to last until this cold is gone." The sound of a chair moving was heard. "I'm going to see if Doctor Lecter has some place to watch the movies. You finish that soup, alright?"

Alana's footsteps made their way back to Doctor Lecter. He looked up from the book he had stopped trying to read. "Do you have a television hidden somewhere? Movies are usually the best way to keep kids in one place."

"If you will give me one moment, I believe I can move one into Will's bedroom." Hannibal got up, and a few minutes later was setting a small but still expensive looking television on the table in Will's room. Will had carefully cleared away the leftover scraps of paper that had been lying around the table and was holding his empty soup bowl. Seeing that made Hannibal feel slightly better.

"Sorry about making you work like this." Will said as he idly ran his fingers through the sandy colored fur of his new plush dog. "You could stay and watch the movie with us if you want to."

"I am sorry, but I have work that needs to be attended to." Hannibal truly did feel sorry about it. He had no interest in Harry Potter whatsoever, but he was touched that Will wanted him to

stay. If the same situation had come up even three days ago, Will wouldn't have offered the suggestion. "We shall have to have a movie night some other time when you are feeling better."

The smile Hannibal got from that statement almost made him forget about his work obligations.

"Thank you again for coming, Dr. Bloom!" Will stood with Hannibal in the doorway to the front steps. He was grinning and waving as Alana got into her car. They had made it through the first movie before Will started to get drowsy. Alana Bloom had decided to head home for the night then.

Hannibal watched the car pull out into the street before turning his attention back to Will. "Now, I believe it is time for you to go to bed." Hannibal once again began to shepherd Will back to his bedroom. He went without complaint this time. Will crawled into bed and grabbed his two dogs before wrapping the blankets around himself and settling in for the night. Hannibal placed a hand to Will's forehead to check the temperature before nodding and turning to exit the room.

"Can we have Dr. Bloom over more often?" Will asked as Hannibal began to leave.

"If you wish." Hannibal replied. "Whatever makes you happy, dear Will."

Chapter End Notes

Sick!Will was not on the list, but I'm going to put it down as the extra crap part of the prompt.

If you have any ideas you want to see here or want to complain about things, drop me a comment or send a message on tumblr.

azvee.tumblr.com

Memories

Chapter Summary

Hannibal remembers why he killed Will's father.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"I don't want to." Will crossed his arms and sent a glare Hannibal's way. Hannibal had just told Will that they were going to get some new outfits for more formal occasions. Will was not happy about the prospect of wearing such clothing.

"Now, Will, formal event demands more than a tee-shirt and jeans. A person should always have an outfit prepared for such times."

"I've never had to dress up in stuffy clothes before, why should I now?"

"It would make me happy if you had more appropriate attire for some of my dinner parties."

"I don't have any money for new things." That wasn't strictly true. With Will's father gone, the matter of what to do with his estate and property fell to the legal system. No doubt Will would find himself with some small sum of money by the time legal proceeding were done. Will didn't know such things though. "I can't buy clothes without any money."

Hannibal sighed, tiring of this debate. "I will purchase them for you, it is no problem."

The idea of Hannibal spending money seemed to only anger Will further. "No! I don't want to owe anyone anything. Taking money from rich people only leads to trouble." The last part seemed to be part of a memorized speech probably given to Will a great many times before. Hannibal placed a hand on Will's shoulder. Jerking back, he shoved Hannibal away from him. "I said no!" The unexpected action managed to catch the man off guard enough that he lost his center of balance and found himself on the floor.

Hannibal recovered quickly and got back on his feet. The idea that someone dared to push him was unheard of. Such an act was more than enough to earn the title of main course. A list of sauces danced briefly before Hannibal as he reveled momentarily in the feeling of a hunt about to start. He would never to give into such thoughts, of course, but the righteous anger that flowed through him was so intoxicating.

That anger must have been evident on his face, or Will himself may have realized that a line was crossed, because his previous stubbornness was gone. Instead, wary eyes watched for

any sort of reaction to being shoved. Will's body tensed, as if preparing to run or block a blow. Hannibal found himself thinking of his first 'meeting' with Will several weeks ago.

Hannibal had just finished with the last of his patients for the day. Franklyn's mother had thankfully been checked into the hospital with some ailment, so the man had reluctantly gone to her side and canceled his appointment with Hannibal. He hoped that the woman would be kind enough to prolong her stay there. It would give him a much needed break from the man, as well as the chance to enjoy the weather more.

He had decided to pick up a few items at the local farmers market, opting for the flavor that only home grown produce seemed to have. It also gave him the chance to look for a main course for the evening. Unfortunately, everyone seemed to be in a friendly mood and Hannibal feared he would have to change his dinner plans. Still, the sun was out and this summer looked to be a comfortable one. He left the crowds and started towards his car with a good mood still intact.

As he placed his purchases in the side door, Hannibal heard two sets of footsteps and a very upset voice interrupt the otherwise silent parking lot. Turning around, he saw an older man with what Hannibal judged to be a beer gut grasping a child, most likely his son, much too tightly by the arm and dragging him to an old rusted car. Reaching the door, he shoved the boy forward and watched as he lost his balance and fell. He didn't get back up, and instead cast his eyes towards the asphalt and his now bleeding palms.

"What the hell was that all about, William?" The man yelled at the crumpled form. Hannibal wrinkled his nose as the smell of cheap alcohol reached his nose. "You don't talk about a suicide! 'Specially when people are placing flowers."

"But, I don't think it was one, Dad!" The boy, William, finally looked up with watery, imploring eyes. "The man that killed her wanted people to think it was one so that he wouldn't be caught. He was angry at h-" Whatever William was about to say was cut off abruptly as a hand hit his face with a loud SMACK!

"You don't talk that way about the dead, boy! I wish you'd keep your damn thoughts inside that head of yours. What have I told you about taking like that 'round other people?" When he didn't get an answer the man grabbed William's bowed head and forced him to look his father in the eyes. "You answer me when I ask you a question. Now, what have I told you about talking like that 'round other people?"

Listening to the sniffle that escaped the boy, Hannibal found himself viewing a long forgotten image from his past. He was no longer looking at a pair of strangers, but a man in uniform and a sister half-frozen from cold. The man was yelling at her to stop making that crying noise while Hannibal sat nearby, powerless to stop this monster from hurting the one thing left in the world he cared about. Blinking, he was back in the warmth of a summer afternoon again, the sole audience member to an act of abuse.

The boy found his voice, although it had shot up an octave or two. "You told me not to. It's not normal and people will know something's wrong with me." The hand in his hair let go,

and yanked open the driver's door. William took that as his que to get in the backseat. Wiping off a few stray tears, he closed the door behind him.

Something cold and dark filled Hannibal as he watched the man start the car. The man had forfeited his life the moment he chose to hit a child, but that wasn't the reason Hannibal was filled with the urge to tear this man limb from limb. No, he had disturbed memories from a past life, awoken an emotion that had died off in the Hannibal that was born when the child in the woods died. Protectiveness. He could not bear the thought of this drunk harming this boy who could look at a make shift memorial and declare it a crime scene. Hannibal promised himself that he would see to it that no one ever hurt this child again. He would protect him like he wished he could have done for his sister all those years ago.

He took note of the license plate number as the car drove away. He had preparations to make.

Hannibal was back in the present again and looking at eyes that held the same fear he had seen weeks ago in the parking lot. Will was worried he'd finally brought out a viloent reaction from Hannibal. Taking a moment to calm his thoughts, Hannibal looked at Will again. "That was very rude, Will. I'm afraid there will be no supper for you tonight."

Will's fear morphed into one of confusion. "What?" Hannibal knew that the child had grown to enjoy the variety of food that turned up on his plate as well as the time spent together in the kitchen. It seemed a good way to curb undesired behavior without the need to employ any physical violence. Hannibal was better than that.

"You heard me, now off to your room. You can spend the rest of your night there thinking over your actions." Hannibal wouldn't dream of hitting Will, it would create a rift between the two and bring Hannibal down to the same level as Mr. Graham. He needed to show that he was a much better caregiver than Will's father had ever been. He guided Will back to his room.

Will's mind finally managed to catch up with the situation as he crossed the threshold into his bedroom. "But, wait." A gentle squeeze on his shoulders quieted Will.

"Hush, no buts now. You have misbehaved, and that can't go without some form of discipline. Good night, Will." Hannibal closed the door, but did not lock it. He was confident that Will would not leave the room. He left to make dinner for one.

A few hours later, Hannibal walked by Will's room to find the door open. Looking inside, he found Will sitting morosely on the bed with his eyes locked on his feet. Hannibal started to walk away when Will called out to him. "I really am sorry."

Hannibal paused in the doorframe. "I know Will, and I forgive you. But, rules are rules."

The next morning, Hannibal made chocolate chip pancakes. Will's favorite.

Chapter End Notes

So, I've officially sorted out the rest of the story plot wise. Now I just need to write it!

If you want to bother me about the story, or just life in general, drop a comment here or on tumblr.

azvee.tumblr.com

Interim

Chapter Summary

Hannibal is confronted with the fact that he may not have custody of Will for much longer.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The past month went by quicker than Will had imagined it ever could. He was feeling much better now than he could remember ever feeling before staying with the Doctor. Dr. Lecter was much more attentive and caring than Will thought a man who had become a twenty-four hour babysitter should be. He was a constant in the ever changing world that Will desperately needed. The Doctor was an anchor for Will to cling to, strong and steady. He put up with any panic attacks or fits that Will had, and never blamed the boy or lashed out at him for anything. Will was even sleeping through the night on rare occasions thanks to the man.

Dr. Lecter had even decided to share in what Will assumed was one of his most precious parts of life with him. He had offed Will the chance to help cook tonight's meal with the man instead of just watching. It was an opportunity that Will thought most professional chefs would be envious of, and he had been given the chance instead. It was a sign of trust and faith that Will would show was not misplaced.

"Now, you're going to want to slice them into long, thin strips." Dr. Lecter instructed while he finished rinsing several potatoes. "They are going to soak up the juices from the meat as it cooks. When you are done, we can work on the carrots and onions as well."

Will nodded as he watched nimble fingers check for any dirt that was stubbornly refusing to get off the vegetable's skin. "Where should I put them when I've finished cutting them?" He didn't want to mess things up by placing anything where it shouldn't go. Everything had a place in the kitchen; Will had learned that by watching the man cook.

Satisfied with his work, the potatoes were placed by the cutting board. "For now, I think merely setting them off to the side shall suffice." He grabbed a knife and began a quick demonstration. "The ends of the potato will be harder to cut. You do not need to rush while working, hasty work is often inferior to something that was done with care." After showing Will the correct way to hold the blade, he watched him make a few slices on his own. "Good. If you believe you have that under control, I will begin preparing the lamb."

For a while they remained like that, working side by side while enjoying the presence of the other. It was a rare moment of peace for Will. His thoughts calmed themselves for a time, and he could pretend for just a little while that this moment wouldn't have to end. He wanted to

stay with this dangerous man who had decided to protect Will instead of harming him. He felt safe with the Doctor, and he hadn't felt safe in such a long time.

Right as Will was starting on the last potato, the doorbell was heard. The sound managed to make him jump a bit and alter the path of the knife just enough to catch a finger instead. "Ow!" The bloodied digit was quickly popped in his mouth. The tang of copper hit his tongue before Dr. Lecter appeared by Will's side. He ignored the ringing at the door and put a hand on Will's arm instead.

"Let me see." A gentle tug released the finger and a clinical gaze assessed the cut. "You should not put an open wound in your mouth. It is just a small graze, nothing to be concerned with." Another ring at the door. "Put your finger under the sink and run some water over it while I find a band-aid for you." Will dutifully obeyed while feeling that he had somehow let the man down. Before he had much time to dwell on the thought, Dr. Lecter reappeared and covered the cut. "There." As if sensing Will's previous thoughts, Hannibal turned to inspect his work. "You did well, Will. Nice clean slices. With more practice, I believe you could create dishes that would rival my own."

Will couldn't help but blush at the praise. "Really?"

"Yes, really." The doorbell rang yet again, and they could no longer ignore whoever was waiting. Dr. Lecter ran a hand through Will's hair before finally going to the door, Will following just a few steps behind.

Hannibal was not expecting company, and found his reservoir of patience and politeness more than a little depleted at the thought of having Will's first proper cooking attempt interrupted. But, he had an image that must be kept up if he were to remain a free man. His mood was soured further when he was greeted by a middle-aged woman woman in a cheap brown pantsuit with an equally cheap briefcase and a permanent frown. "Ms. Buchanan, what a surprise." He stepped aside and gestured for her to enter. "Please come in."

He glanced at Will as his long absent social worker entered the building. The boy was much less skilled in hiding his displeasure at her sudden reappearance. He was glaring at the woman as if hoping his gaze might set her on fire. She seemed equally displeased to see Will again, and opted for ignoring his presence entirely. "I realize that this is a bit unexpected, and I do usually call in advance, but things have gotten so backed up at work lately. William just got put on the back-burner for a while."

"That is quite alright, I understand completely." Hannibal responded, putting a sympathetic face on while he fumed internally. Showing up unannounced with more paperwork was beyond rude. "Come and sit in the study, the chairs are much comfier there. Would you like anything to drink?"

"Some strong coffee would be great." She replied as soon as Hannibal had finished escorting her to a chair. He nodded and took off to the kitchen, with Will once again following behind.

"What is she doing here?" Will hissed as soon as the door shut behind them.

Hannibal would need to teach Will to be more tactful in the future. "Truthfully, I do not know. I imagine there are more papers that need filling out. She will be gone soon." Hannibal sent an apologetic look towards Will, wanting nothing more than to send her away. Unfortunately, getting rid of her would only cause more problems at this stage. Hannibal made up the coffee while Will pouted in the armchair. "Come along, Will. The sooner we learn why Ms. Buchanan is here, the sooner she may leave." That got a small smirk out of Will.

The case worker sighed appreciatively when the drink was handed off to her before Hannibal took a seat opposite her. "Thank you. You can not imagine how much I needed this drink." She took a sip before going on. "I'm just here to hand off and explain a few release and transfer forms. It really shouldn't take you too long to work through them."

"What do you mean by transfer?" Will asked from the far corner of the room. He seemed reluctant to go anywhere near the woman. "I thought that I was going to stay with Dr. Lecter."

She seemed surprised that Will was still in the room. "Dr. Lecter was just a temporary caregiver, we needed to make sure you weren't going to hurt yourself or anyone else before we could find you a more suitable place to live. You should be out of here and with other children within about two weeks or so."

Hannibal was about to speak when Will took several steps forward. "But, I don't want to leave! I want to stay here." He was grabbing Hannibal's arm and shaking it. "You don't want me to go, right? Tell her, Hannibal!"

Whatever reply Hannibal was about to make quickly vanished at the use of his first name. Will had never addressed his as anything other than his title as a doctor. The swell of fondness replaced his words with a soft mumble. "Will..."

The social worker took this as a sign Hannibal was ready to send Will away. "You should have been placed in a foster home after your initial release from the hospital, but the FBI didn't want that to happen. Now, could you give us a few moments alone? I need to go over a few minor details with Mr. Lecter, and I'm sure you'd just get bored."

"But I don't want to go!" Will was trembling slightly now, looking between the two adults to try and see what he should do. "Please, Hannibal."

"It will be alright, Will. This should be taken care of in just a few minutes." Will looked as if he had just been struck. Finally letting go of Hannibal's arm, he raced out of the room.

Ms. Buchanan scoffed before turning her attention back to Hannibal. "I swear, you must be some sort of saint for putting up with that kid. I'd be more than ready to get rid of him by now." She had more of the drink while Hannibal stewed over her comment.

Get rid of Will? This woman was begging to end up on his table. William was his, and she had no right to try and snatch him away from Hannibal and throw him into the state system. The poor boy would not be able to handle that kind of change. Will would be lost with no one to turn to. He'd become just another number. Hannibal wouldn't allow that to happen.

Her monotone voice cut off Hannibal's thoughts. "Your time as interim guardian is almost up, and we appreciate how cooperative you've been watching him. William is a very difficult case, but we think he should find a good home with the Millars. They've got several other boys there already."

"I have not found Will to be difficult in the slightest." Hannibal responded with a slightly clipped voice. "Perhaps you simply need to try a different approach."

Ms. Buchanan frown deepened even further than Hannibal thought possible. "I've worked with a lot of children, and William has been one of the hardest cases I've had to deal with. He never wanted to talk to me unless it was to argue with me."

"Perhaps you should start to refer to him as Will instead of William. He is not fond of his full name."

She opened her briefcase and find Hannibal's paperwork. "Well, it's not like that's going to matter at this point. He already hates me. Here." A small stack of papers were thrust in Hannibal's direction. "Most of it's just check the box and sign. Not too complicated."

"Thank you," Hannibal replied snatching the papers, eager to get rid of this woman. "I do not believe I require any assistance with these."

She seemed genuinely shocked by the idea of not being needed. Although, Hannibal couldn't tell if her response to the thought was a positive or negative one. "But, there are a few questionnaire forms in there where the wording is tricky. Most people usually need help-"

"You will find that I am not 'most people,' Ms. Buchanan" He interrupted, the desire to purge the house of this woman rising as time went on. "I will be in contact if I need any help from you in the future." Hannibal rose to his feet and collected the half-finished cup of coffee, despite a small noise of protest that was raised by the action. "I think that you really should be getting back to work now, if things are as backed up as you claim them to be. Allow me to escort you to the door."

He got all the way to the doorway out of the study before the social worker found her voice again. "Dealing with that kid is part of why things are so backed up. Now, I really do think that I should stay and help you look things over before leaving. I don't want to have to come back here and take time out of my busy schedule to sort things out with you later."

"I have my own lawyer to help me should these prove at all difficult. You need not worry about it."

She thought it through for a moment before getting up as well. "Alright, but don't say I didn't warn you when things get hard." They made it to the door in silence before the woman

decided that a parting thought was in order. "Honestly, I thought you'd be much happier about finally getting rid of that kid. There's just something not right about him."

"What is not right about him is none of your concern." Hannibal snapped in anger before regaining his composure. He gently shoved Ms. Buchanan across the entrance before speaking in his usual cool demeanor. "I will see to it that everything is taken care of. Good day, Ms. Buchanan." He closed the door on her before she had a chance to respond. Not the most polite way to deal with an unwanted guest, but Hannibal didn't care what her opinion of him was.

Hannibal went to go find Will as soon as the door clicked shut. Eventually, he found the boy in the small reading room he kept for the older books in his collection. Will was sitting on the floor hugging Winston. He sent a halfhearted glare at Hannibal before trying his best to pretend he didn't exist. Hannibal sat down next to Will and waited. He was a patient man after all.

After a few minutes, Will finally spoke. "Go away." Will grumbled and squeezed Winston tighter. "You can just ignore me until I go away. I won't mind."

"Will," Hannibal sighed. "Why would I ever want to ignore you?"

Will's hands fisted in Winston's fur. "You're just waiting to get rid of me!"

Hannibal waited to see if Will had anything add before he spoke. "You know that is not true. You are a very smart boy, Will, you know how much I enjoy having you stay here."

"No one ever wants me around..." Will replied with a strained voice. He suddenly became very interested in Winston's eyes and looked away from Hannibal. Tears born of frustration and rejection pooled at the edge of his eyes. Hannibal brushed them away before they could fall.

"Would you like to stay?"

"What?" Will locked eyes with Hannibal, not quite understanding just yet, but sensing the importance of the question nonetheless.

"Would you like to stay with me? Permanently." Realization was beginning to dawn in those blue eyes. "I want you around, Will."

He understood now. "What..." Incredulity was what made Will ask the question this time. "Are you saying you want to adopt me?"

A small grin found its way onto Hannibal's face. "Yes."

Will was suddenly wrapped around Hannibal's torso, grinning from ear to ear. "Yes, I want to stay with you! Yes yes yes!" His grip on Hannibal tightened, and a laugh came tumbling out. Hannibal found his own grin widening at Will's obvious joy. He placed an arm on Will's shoulder and thought of what the future would hold for them now.

Chapter End Notes

Help in the kitchen is officially crossed off now!

A Day at the Park

Chapter Summary

> Hannibal and Alana have a chat while Will meets other children. Beverly and a surprise are also present.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"So, you're serious about all this?" Alana questioned while looking over the apples before her. "Adopting a child is a very big responsibility. I hate to sound cliche, but it changes practically everything about your life."

Hannibal simply smiled back at her. "Do you really think I was not aware of that before making my choice? I had hoped a former student would think better of me."

She responded with a roll of her eyes and handed him an apple to put in his bag. "You know what I'm asking. Redirecting the question isn't going to get you out of answering it."

"I am very serious. It would break my heart if William were sent away to a group of strangers that would not understand him." A few more fruits joined the apple before he paid the vendor and began to steer Alana towards the exit. As much as Hannibal loved shopping for produce outside, he did have other stops to make today. "Will is an exceptional child and deserves better than becoming just another number for the government to worry about. Besides, I have grown to enjoy the company. The house would seem much too empty if he were to leave."

The younger psychiatrist allowed a smile to grace her face. "You aren't the first person I normally think of when it comes to dealing with children."

"I thought you were the one who first approached me about looking after Will two months ago."

Alana sent him an appraising look trying to see if her mentor was being serious or joking. "That was different. Will needed a safe space where someone outside of the FBI could help him. You're one of the most calming people I know, and a damn good psychiatrist."

Hannibal tsked softly before chastising her. "Such language."

Alana simply rolled her eyes again. "Please. Now, are we going to go pick up Will?"

"Actually, I have one more errand to run. Perhaps you should go meet Will and Ms. Katz while I finish it. I will be along shortly." He left Doctor Bloom standing by the entrance to the park trying to guess what else the man could possibly need.

The other kids didn't like Will, they never did. He'd look at them and see too much about them. Unlike the various adults he'd met, who had learned to hide themselves behind masks, kids hadn't learned how to do that yet. Every single emotion or desire shone out with a brilliance that often overwhelmed Will. He usually found himself slipping into the thoughts of every child he tried to talk to and becoming them for a bit. He'd start to imitate how they talked or moved, and then they'd either think he was making fun of them or that he was too weird to talk to.

Going to the park hadn't been Will's idea, he liked staying at home with Hannibal much more. It was quiet and he didn't need to worry about being judged there. Dr. Bloom had been the one to suggest it when she'd shown up today with another lady that Will remembered seeing at the FBI building. She'd wanted to go shopping at the farmers market with Hannibal and thought that Will could spend some time at the playground nearby. Will sensed that Dr. Bloom had wanted to talk to Hannibal about something alone, so he'd agreed. Will was not excited about the possibility that he'd have to spend time with the other children at the playground. He was even less excited about having to spend time with the other woman, he thought Hannibal called her Ms. Katz, who had been left to watch him.

Opting to get away from the strange woman who may be watching him on behalf of Agent Crawford, Will decided to take his chances with the other kids. He wandered through the jungle gym full of very loud children and tried not to get run over by several girls playing tag. Eventually, he found a sandbox that was only occupied by a small boy in a baseball cap. He looked to be about five and was much too busy with his sand to pay Will any real attention. Will picked up a stick and doodled on the opposite end of the sandbox.

After several quiet minutes had passed, Will heard the sound of several voices growing louder. A group of boys led by a very large ten-year-old wearing a shirt with long sleeves were approaching the sandbox. The group stopped in front of the other boy and formed a loose circle around him.

"Why aren't you wearing an Orioles hat?" The leader of the group asked before snatching the cap off the younger boy. "No one here likes the Cubs."

"Hey! Give it back!" The boy tried to grab his hat back, but was shoved to the ground. "My dad gave me that!"

"Yeah, and now you gave it to me." He dangled the hat just out of reach, a clear challenge to try and take it back.

The smaller child looked around hoping to find anyone to help, and Will caught his eyes. Frustration and fear hit him, and he found himself getting to his feet without realizing it. Will just wanted the other boy's emotions to calm down. "Just give him back his hat. You just said you didn't like the team anyway."

The other boy turned and sneered at Will. He was taller than him by a few inches. “Oh yeah? What happens if I don’t give it back?” He pulled on each of his sleeves before stepping closer to Will and staring him down.

Anger hit Will like a brick wall. This kid wanted to hit and hurt anyone he thought was weaker than him. But, there was something under all the rage. Watching the boy tug at his sleeves again, Will understood. He was wearing long shirts on one of the hottest days they’d had all summer. Will had had done similar things to hide bruises on his body. Will suddenly saw this bully at home with an angry parent, probably his dad. He was the punching bag when anything went wrong. This boy was so angry and upset, but couldn’t fight back against his father. He took his anger out of people that couldn’t beat him back.

Sympathy for someone stuck in a situation Will knew all too well overwhelmed him. He knew it must have shown on his face, because the fist the other boy had been making was released. “I’m sorry.” Will whispered.

The kid’s expression morphed from one of confusion. He hadn’t done anything yet to make Will want to apologize. “What are you talking about?”

Will touched his sleeve. “I’m sorry, I know it’s bad. But you don’t need to be mad at other people.”

“What’s he talking about, Terry?” One of the other boys asked.

Terry yanked his hand back like Will had tried to burn him. A defensive anger at having someone know his secret filled his eyes before shoving Will to the ground and kicking sand at him. “Nothing, the guy’s just crazy. Come on, we’ve got better things to do.” With one last kick of sand, he led the group away, dropping the hat and stepping on it.

The other resident of the sandbox got up and grabbed his hat after the others had gone. He looked at Will. “Thanks.” He then ran off towards some other area of the playground.

Will stood up and tried to shake the sand and Terry’s anger off him. The sand left easier, and he ended up leaving the sandbox as well. Will didn’t know where he was going until he almost ran into the swingset. He sat and tried to pull himself out of the all too familiar memories and emotions. It was always hard to remember which parts where his after looking at other people for too long.

“Hey, what was that all about?” Ms. Katz asked as she sat down sideways on the swing next to Will. She’d managed to sneak up on him. “Do I need to go beat up someone?”

Will frowned at her, he didn’t want to talk to anyone right now. “You’re not supposed to sit on a swing like that.” He just wanted to get out of the other boy’s head.

“Says who?” She asked before pushing Will’s own seat sideways.

He had to pause before answering. “Just people. It’s the rules.”

“Well, it’s not a very good rule if you don’t know who came up with it.” She wrapped her hands around one of the chains holding the seat up and rocked back and forth. “You want to tell me why you’re hanging out here alone?”

He shook his head. “Not really, no.”

“You don’t like the other kids too much, do you?” She paused, waiting for an answer. When Will didn’t give one, she started up again. “That’s alright. I never liked the kids I knew when I was little anyway. The girls would always make fun of the dresses that I wore. Then the boys wouldn’t let me play with them because I wore dresses.”

“What did you do?”

“I punched a guy in the mouth and stole his baseball bat. Next time I saw them, the entire team took off running.” A proud grin filled her face.

That got a smile out of Will and helped to get rid of the remnants of the other boy clinging to him. “You sound like a pretty tough kid.”

“Hey, I’m still tough. And you want to know the best part of that story? The guy I took the bat from works in the same building as me.” She leaned forward on the swing and dropped her voice to a whisper. “I think he’s still scared of me, he won’t go into a room alone if I’m in it.”

Will’s grin widened. He decided that he liked Ms. Katz, even if she might work for Jack Crawford.

Ms. Katz smiled back and shoved him sideways again.. “Hey, how old are you?”

“Eight.”

She reached into her bag and pulled out a pack of cards. “Want to learn how to play poker? I think you’d be really good at it.

Hannibal returned about an hour after he had bid Alana a temporary farewell. He was a bit surprised when he didn’t immediately see her or Will around the playground. After second scan of the area, he found them under a nearby tree. They had gotten playing cards from somewhere, and Beverly was showing Will several different cards. Alana was the first to notice Hannibal and waved. She stopped when she noticed a small ball of fur in his arms. Will jumped to his feet to get a better view of what Hannibal was holding. Hannibal could see his eyes lighting up when he recognized what was being carried.

When he deemed it close enough, Hannibal bent down and released and small bundle of black and tan fluff. It took off bouncing towards the three people staring at it, letting out several short cries as it approached the group. It reached Will first and began jumping around his legs barking.

Will let out a cry of his own and bent down towards the small creature attacking his legs. “Whose dog is this?” He ended up sitting on the grass while the puppy ran in a circle around him.

“So, are you taking up petsitting now?” Beverly asked with a smirk.

“No. This dog is for Will. I thought he could use a companion around the house.”

That got Will’s attention. “We’re keeping her? I’ve never had a real dog before! My dad always said they cost too much money. What kind of dog is it? Is it a boy or girl? Do we have any food ready? Can it stay in my room? What are we going to call it?” The words came tumbling out of his mouth almost faster than he could speak them.

Hannibal chuckled at the flood of questions thrown at him. “She is a purebred havanese who has plenty of food waiting for her at home, and may stay in your room.”

“What about a name?” Beverly asked. “Every dog should have a name.”

Hannibal laid a hand on Will’s shoulder. “I believe that responsibility lies with you, Will.”

Will looked at the small bundle of fluff trying to crawl onto his lap. “I’m going to have to think about it for awhile.” He finally responded in a serious voice. “I don’t want to give her the wrong name, she’s going to be stuck with it for the rest of her life.”

Hannibal nodded and handed off a leash to Will. “I’m sure that whatever name you chose will suit her.” Will sent Hannibal another one of those smiles he found himself becoming addicted to. He returned it with a grin of his own. “Now, I believe we promised these ladies that there would be desert today.”

Chapter End Notes

Hannibal has totally been looking for a dog ever since Alana got Will Winston. He wanted to one-up her, although he’d never admit it!

Havanese are apparently a bit of a rare breed in the US, and Hannibal does love rare things. They’re actually pretty smart and good with kids. Plus, who’d look at a dog that cute and accuse Hannibal of being a serial killer. Also, I may have wanted to give Hannibal a small ball of fur because that it probably as far removed from the kind of animal he would normally get. (He’s totally going to spoil the shit out of her though! Just like he does with Will.)

For reference on the dog:
http://www.havaneseri.com/images/k-9.jpg puppy picture
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8VyL0SAVQ7s youtube video about the fluff balls.
I'm actually quite bored so, feel free to bug me. You can find me in the comments or on my tumblr: azvee.tumblr.com

Home Study

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"You are such a good girl! Aren't you, Sadie?" Will cooed at the puppy. He had just finished showing Hannibal the latest trick he had taught the dog. Hannibal grinned as he watched Will play with the pup. Sadie helped Will interact more with others, and gave him a much needed friend. If Sadie happened to have some of the most adorable expressions a dog could ever make, and an appreciation for the fine food Hannibal cooked, than that was just an unexpected bonus. The ringing of the doorbell was what interrupted the morning's calm. Will looked to Hannibal silently asking who was intruding on their morning.

"That must be the social worker." Will's mood immediately soured. He reacted that way anytime someone mentioned the woman. Hannibal actually believed that the response had been wired into his subconscious.

"But, I thought that Ms. Buchanan had already made her visit this week. Why's she back so soon?" A slight pout worked its way onto his face.

"Actually, this should be someone new. I received a call a few days ago informing me that Ms. Buchanan would be unable to finish her home study. They would not say why, but I think a change in workers might be a good thing." Hannibal knew why Ms. Buchanan was no longer going to be working with them, but telling Will such things would be extremely ill-advised. Instead, he settled for a feeling of pride at the way Will's shoulders stopped slumping and his frown vanished.

A young woman, looking to be freshly out of college stood on the other side of the door. Her skirt and blouse looked like something a person would find in a second hand clothing store, but her bright smile made up for her poor clothing choices. "Hi! Are you Doctor Lecter?" A nod. "It's great to meet you! I'm Elizabeth Coleman , but you can call me Bessie if you like. Everyone else does it anyway. I'm going to be taking over Ms. Buchanan's work for a little while, so I thought we should get to know each other a little better." She extended a hand for Hannibal to shake.

Hannibal shook the hand and gave her a polite smile. "It is good to meet you, Ms. Coleman. Please come inside."

"What happened to Ms. Buchanan?" Will asked.

Elizabeth's smile faltered for just a moment before replying. "Oh, nothing. I think she's just gone on a vacation or something. You really should tell people before you go and do something like that, but that's alright. I get to meet some cool new people until she gets back." Will frowned, clearly having caught at least part of the lie. Elizabeth either didn't notice his face, or chose to ignore it as she followed Hannibal though the house.

“Would you like anything to eat? Will and I have been practicing making several different deserts and would be more than happy to get your opinion on the taste.”

“You cook?” She asked and grinned at Will. “That is soooo cute!” Hannibal was reminded of Will’s earlier interactions with Sadie. Said dog came trotting down the hall to meet this strange new person in her house. Elizabeth dropped to her knees the second she spotted the dog. “And who are you?” She cooed at the puppy.

“That’s Sadie! Hannibal got her, and I’m training her.” Will proudly declared. “Sadie’s already house trained and the smartest dog I've ever met.”

“Oh really?” Ms. Coleman asked with a raised eyebrow. It seemed she had found the way to Will’s heart. “Does she know any tricks?”

“Yeah, watch. Sadie, sit.” The dog sat. Will held up a hand. “Now, stay.” She watched Will’s retreating form as he walked to the end of the hall. “Come, Sadie!” The dog bounced to Will and was rewarded by several pats on the head and a belly rub. Will turned to face Hannibal and the social worker with a proud grin. “So, what do you think?”

Elizabeth nodded before declaring. “Yup, I think that is one of the smartest animals I have ever met.”

“Yes, very well done, Will. You are a natural with animals.” If it was possible, the grin widened even further at Hannibal’s words. “Now,” he said turning towards the social worker. “I think we would be much comfier sitting. This way please.”

A little over an hour later, Ms. Coleman was packing away her notes from the meeting. “Anyway, I guess that about wraps things up. I’d love to stay and hang out with you, but I’m making the rounds today. I’m hoping to meet the rest of the families that Cheryl worked with today.”

“I can imagine the day must be a long one for you.” Hannibal commented with just the right amount of sympathy lacing his voice. “Working weekends is hardly the way to spend one’s summer.”

“Oh, I don’t mind much. If everyone else feeds me brownies like you guys, I’ll work everyday!”

Hannibal leaned forward in his chair, finally asking the question he had been holding in since Ms. Coleman’s arrival. “So, do you know the true reason why you find yourself suddenly taking on Ms. Buchanan’s entire workload? I know that what you said to Will earlier was a lie.”

Elizabeth tossed the last of her papers into a folder before meeting Hannibal's gaze. She suddenly looked much more worn down than she was a moment ago. "I never could lie to a shrink. Well...don't tell anyone I told you this, ok? I could get into real trouble." She paused before going on. "No one's seen her for over a week. The office called her home, and she never answered, she wasn't home when cops finally got around to checking for her there either. I think she might be dead." Her voice had dropped to a near whisper by the end.

Hannibal adopted a somber face before responding. "I apologize, I should not have asked you."

The young woman shrugged off his concern and put a smile back on, although it seemed much less genuine than the others. "It's alright, I'm probably just looking for some drama to liven up work. I tend to blow things out of proportion. I can show myself to the door, if that's alright. I just need a moment to calm down before heading off to the next family."

"Of course." Sincerity filled Hannibal's voice. "Take as much time as you need." He watched from the window a few minutes later as her form retreated down the stairs and towards an old yellow car. She was a marked improvement from her predecessor.

Confident that the house was emptied of guests once again, Hannibal took off towards Will's room. He wanted to be sure that he approved of the change as well. Will was sitting on his bed reading a comic book that Beverly had brought him. Sadie was on the bed as well, despite Hannibal's repeated statements that dogs were not allowed on the furniture. That rule would probably carry more weight with Will if the boy hadn't caught Hannibal feeding Sadie scraps of meat shortly after declaring that dogs were to eat dog food. Both heads perked up when he entered the room.

"So, what are your thoughts on our new friend?"

Will thought for a moment before replying. "She talks to me like I'm a baby, but she likes Sadie. So...I guess she's okay."

"Better than Ms. Buchanan?" Hannibal asked with a knowing smile.

Will made a face. "Everyone's better than her. She didn't like Sadie. Said that she was a 'bad idea' and a 'waste of time and energy to maintain.'" Will buried his face in the dogs fur. He was clearly thinking of insults that weren't directed at his pet. "Sadie's a good dog, she shouldn't talk about her that way."

"It is alright, Will, we know better." A comforting hand was placed on his shoulder. "Ms. Buchanan was wrong about a great many things." Leaning into Hannibal's frame, Will missed the way the man's eyes darkened. She was certainly wrong about what she had said to Hannibal. The woman had sealed her fate when she began insulting his Will when the boy wasn't even around to defend himself.

“So, he has a dog now?” Ms. Buchanan’s voice sounded much less than pleased as she watched Will disappear with Sadie following at his heels. “They can bite and cause God only knows what kind of diseases.”

“I assure you, Sadie is quite well behaved. I checked with her breeder and did a great deal of research before purchasing her.” Hannibal would not have gotten an animal that would have even the slightest probability of harming Will. “Besides, Will needed a friend.”

“And a dog is going to be his friend? Shouldn’t he be with other children?”

“Will does not do well around other children.”

“Doesn’t surprise me.” Her tone sounded haughty as she scribbled something down in her notebook. Hannibal was not pleased to hear it.

“What do you mean by that?”

“Nothing important.” Ms. Buchanan replied. “Let’s just finish this meeting. The sooner I can wrap this up, the sooner you can get back to fawning over the kid.”

“Would you care to stay for a glass of wine before you go?” Hannibal offered with a disarming grin. Something about her tone made Hannibal curious as to what she would say after being plied with alcohol. She accepted without hesitation.

“Oh, Doctor Lecter, I really do have to ask; why Will?” The slightly slurred voice asked. The wine had been doing its work well over the last hour. “You’re such a smart, good looking man, why’d you want a trainwreck like him?”

She missed the way Hannibal noticeably stiffened and gripped his drink a bit tighter. “William is not a trainwreck, Ms. Buchanan, and I would ask that you not refer to him as such.”

The woman shrugged before going on anyway.“Come on, you can only blame so much on the death of Daddy. That boy was messed up way before that happened. He doesn’t like to make eye contact and when he does, he pulls out all your dark secrets. He’s got some weird disorder, I know it. People like that should be studied. A lot of em were in the past. I think he should be being studied, we could learn a lot about people like him.”

“Are you suggesting that he become a test subject to be experimented on?”

“Social workers aren’t supposed to say that sort of thing...but I clocked out at least half an hour ago. Besides,” her hands had somehow found Hannibal’s legs without him noticing. “I would rather make babies instead of talking about them. Much more fun.”

Hannibal grabbed her hands with a speed and strength that surprised the woman. “It’s time for you to go, Ms. Buchanan.” This was not where he had imagined this conversation would go.

She giggled at the reaction, misinterpreting disgust for shyness. “Please, call me Cheryl. And a gentleman like you wouldn’t let a lady drive home while intoxicated. It wouldn’t look good on your home studies evaluation.”

“Are you trying to blackmail me?” His voice had lost all emotion.

“I’m just saying that your bed would be a pretty nice place to go to sleep this off…” Cheryl batted her eyes in what she must have thought was a flirtatious manner. To Hannibal, it seemed more like she was trying to send a morse code message to him.

Hannibal was on his feet and grabbing the phone before she could continue her current train of thought.“I am calling you a cab. We will not be needing your services any longer.” Grabbing the remainder of her drink, he placed it out of her reach.

“Hey! I wasn’t finished with that! And, I’m the one that decides when you’re done needing me." The rejection finally appeared to be sinking in as her face clouded over with anger. "Or even if you can even keep your little sideshow. He’s as much a waste of space as that little dog he has. You’re better off without him.”

What little common sense Hannibal had left had gone away. This woman would die tonight. She would go to her well-earned death apologizing for ever speaking ill of his Will. No one was allowed to insult him. “We will be better off without you. Now, you can go wait for your ride outside. I think keeping you indoors may make my food rot.” She staggered to the door in a huff while Hannibal plotted how best to end her life.

Once again deciding that he made the right choice, Hannibal ran his hand through Will's curls. “It hardly matters anymore what that woman said or thought, we won’t be seeing her anymore.”

Chapter End Notes

So, if anyone can tell me who the new social worker was named after, you get knowledge and a cookie!

Come chat me up on tumblr! I love to hear from people, and it gives me the warm fuzzies to know you read these notes. azvee.tumblr.com

Detour

Chapter Summary

Jack makes an unfortunate discovery that ruins Will and Hannibal's day.

The day had been a long one for Will. Hannibal had insisted on taking him out to the dedication of a new art-display in Cambridge. He had been invited by a friend, and that meant spending around two hours trapped in a car both ways. As interesting as the sculptures being put on display were, enduring the long drive and talking to strangers had left him drained. Will just wanted to get home and go to bed. He was already dozing in the car on the way back.

Will had fallen asleep in the surprisingly comfortable passenger seat when a ringing noise disturbed his slumber. When the sound didn't stop, Will groped around blindly for whatever was waking him up. Eventually, his hand settled on a small, vibrating rectangle that his still sleeping brain identified as a phone. He brought it to his ear and pressed the talk button, hoping to get rid of whoever was on the other end.

"Dr. Lecter, we need to talk." A loud, yet familiar voice rang in Will's ears. "He's done it again! The Ripper's active, and I think you might be in danger."

"What're you talking about?" Will mumbled, still not yet fully awake.

"What the...Will?" The voice sounded confused, but recovered quickly. "Where's Dr. Lecter?"

Will uncurled himself and rubbed at his eyes. They were at a gas station. "I dunno, maybe paying for stuff?" As his mind shook off the remainders of sleep, the voice's previous statements began to make sense. "Did you say that the Ripper killed someone?"

"That doesn't matter right now." Will recognized the voice as Jack. Even without seeing the man, Will could tell he was trying his best to appear calm and unconcerned with the current situation. He didn't want to frighten Will. It wasn't working since Will could feel fear began to course through him. "Can you go find Dr. Lecter? It's very important."

As if on cue, Hannibal chose that moment to emerge from the building, looking very out of place at the gas station in his suit. He noticed Will on his cell phone and opened the passenger door. "People should not answer another's phone, Will." Hannibal lightly scolded.

"It's Agent Crawford." Will replied with wide eyes before handing off the phone he had been holding much too tightly. "I think the Ripper's killed someone."

He watched Hannibal's face morph from one of impassiveness into a worried one. "I will be just a minute, wait here." He took the cell phone from Will before closing the door and walking away from the car. He did not want Will to hear what was being spoken. Will had to sit there and hope that he had misheard what Jack had said.

Several long minutes later, a somber Hannibal took his seat in the driver's side of the car. "Jack has just informed me that the Chesapeake Ripper has struck again. He wants me to stop by the scene as soon as possible to give him my opinion on the matter. I can take you back home before going there if you wish."

"Is it on the way back?" Will asked even though he already knew the answer to that question.

Hannibal nodded. "Yes. Just a few miles outside of Annapolis."

"We can stop."

Hannibal frowned slightly at Will's statement. "I don't think that is a good idea."

"You need to get there as soon as possible. That way you can maybe help save someone's life." Will tired to think only about the people that could die if this man wasn't caught. He didn't think about all the blood left in his father's kitchen or how little he could actually remember from that night. Those thoughts wouldn't help anyone.

There was a long moment of silence before Hannibal started the engine. "Very well, if that is what you wish." He paused and sent Will a concerned look. "However, if you change your mind on the way there, tell me and we will go straight to Baltimore from here. Understand?"

Will nodded and Hannibal pulled out of the service station. Silence filled the car as Will's mind painted the world outside the car red.

The crime scene was filled with yellow tape and men with badges. They had formed a barricade by the entrance to a local biking trail. Will guessed that a biker had found the body while out riding. Several local officers began to approach the car that clearly didn't belong to any members of law enforcement before being chased away by Jack Crawford. He had a frightening combination of angry and miserable spread across his face. He waited patiently next to Hannibal's door.

"Please wait in the car, Will" Hannibal requested. "I will try to make this as brief as possible, but this is no place for a child to be." Will's normal protest at being referred to as a child was forgotten as he watched the flashing lights bounce off of the trees. The driver's door closed a moment later, and Will was alone.

He looked around at all the men and women darting across the bike trail's entrance. Although none of them looked familiar to Will, the scene did. He was struck with the memory of when

the cops first descended on his house, with flashing lights and loud voices. Will couldn't hear what they were saying, all he could think about was how red his kitchen was. The seatbelt around him morphed into the arm of a cop trying to get him to leave his house. But Will couldn't, he couldn't leave without knowing what had happened to his dad. He remembered kicking and screaming until a needle pricked his skin and everything faded into an inescapable darkness.

The car was suddenly much too small, and Will found himself tumbling out onto the ground before he had even realized that he'd opened the door. Brushing his knees off and taking a few calming breaths, he looked around. He didn't see Hannibal anywhere. That left him with two options. The first was to wait in the car for Hannibal's return. The second would be to try and locate the man before anyone noticed there was a child running around a crime scene. Glancing back at the car, Will decided he wanted to get as far away from the memories it brought back as possible. That meant trying to find Hannibal was the only choice left.

Will began to sneak down the trail while trying his best to blend into the shadows. All the officers and agents seemed much too busy trying to gather evidence or discuss the murder. No one had time to notice the small body picking his way by them. Things were going well until Will reached a fork in the road. People were walking down both paths, so he couldn't tell which one was the correct choice. He didn't want to get lost in the woods at night when someone had just been killed here. He suddenly felt very alone.

"Will?" A hand was placed on his shoulder, and Will jumped and spun around. Beverly was staring at him. "What are you doing here?"

"Beverly!" Relief flooded through Will and he resisted the urge to hug the woman. She was the first familiar face he'd seen since getting out of the car. "I'm looking for Hannibal. Agent Crawford took him somewhere to talk, and now I can't find him."

"I think I know where to find them. But, you're going to have to wait here for a bit, okay?" She grabbed the arm of a photographer who was walking by them. "Hey, watch Will for a bit. I need to go find someone."

The man rubbed his shoulder and looked at Will. "Why is a kid here?"

"That's not important. What is important is that you are staying here with him unless you want to get in trouble with Jack. I'll be right back, play nice." She took off down the trail before the man could have a chance to argue.

"How's the camera work?" Will asked after a minute of awkward silence. Neither seemed too eager to talk, but not talking was just as bad.

"Here," the man handed the instrument off to Will before taking out a phone. "You can look at it, just don't break it." He didn't know how to deal with children. Will asumed he was an only child from a wealthy family. He wouldn't be worried about toys getting damaged, he'd just get a new one.

Still, Will was happy to have something to occupy his time with. He pressed a few buttons and somehow ended up in the recent photos section. Images of a naked woman filled the

screen. He was going to drop the camera and look away, but she looked familiar. Looking closer, he saw who it was. "Ms. Buchanan?" She was dead.

"What?" The guy looked up from whatever game he was playing just in time to see Will staring at a corpse. "Shit! Sorry about that!" He grabbed the camera back from Will. "I guess I shouldn't swear in front of kids...hey, are you alright?" Will hadn't realized it, but he was trembling slightly.

“I’m fine.” Will lied and wrapped his arms around himself to stop the tremors as they settled into silence yet again, with Will feeling very lost and alone.

It had taken longer to find the body of Ms. Buchanan than Hannibal had expected it would. But, at least the setting sun’s rays lit up his display in a way that was truly breathtaking to behold. A day or two later, and the entire work would have been ruined. The woman had been impaled on a dying pine tree. Getting the brittle branches to support her had been challenging, but the withered tree complimented her disposition so well. Seeing her like this, Hannibal thought that she was finally being put to proper use. Her lungs and a few other parts would be put to good use at home as well.

“Why would the Ripper wish to target Ms. Buchanan?” He asked in a horrified tone. Hannibal gloated on the inside when he saw how convinced Jack was of his disgust at finding out that an acquaintance met such a violent end.

“I don’t know yet, but I have an idea.” Crawford replied. “It’s part of the reason why I called you. I already discussed the idea with Dr. Bloom, and she’s going to be looking into it more, but I’d like you to hear it as well. What is the common factor between this murder and the last Ripper murder?”

Hannibal knew this was coming. He’d known since he decided to end the woman’s pathetic life. “William is the only thing I can think of.”

The Agent’s eyes lit up. “Exactly. Two murders with victims that can be tied back to Will Graham. That’s a pretty odd coincidence, don’t you think?”

“I hardly think Will is capable of murder.” Hannibal gave the man a small smile to let him know that was an attempt at humor and not an insult.

“I don’t think he is either.” Jack replied seriously, not willing to joke while a dead woman hung just a few feet in front of him. “But it’s the strongest lead we’ve got at the moment.” He looked away, as if collecting his thoughts before going on. “He might not be safe to be around, Doctor.”

That thought made Hannibal pause. He had planned for several different conversations with the man, but none that involved the idea of William becoming a danger to others. He now knew why Agent Crawford had asked to speak with him here instead of in an office. Talking in front of a corpse tends to add an increased importance onto everything a person says. Especially if they're talking about how you could be the next body found on a tree. He was hoping Hannibal would send Will away. Would normal people do that in this situation?

"Hey!" A voice called out, interrupting Hannibal's train of thought. Ms. Katz had appeared and was approaching. "Dr. Lecter! I found Will, and I think it's about time for him to go home."

"I thought he was waiting in the car." Jack stated, clearly upset by the idea of a child running around undetected so close to a dead body.

"Where is Will now?" Hannibal asked, hoping that he hadn't been left unattended once again. He had hoped that Will would never learn who had been killed, but it seemed that wish was a vain one.

"He's where I found him. There's a guy watching him right now. I'm pretty sure he walked past about half the people out there before I spotted him. And I wasn't going to let him see the dead body." She actually sounded offended that Hannibal would need to ask such a question. "Will's already seen more than enough of that."

A surprising amount of relief washed over Hannibal. Will didn't need to see what had happened to his former social worker. The grateful look he gave her was genuine for once. "Thank you. I think it is about time for us to be going. You are more than welcome to walk with us to the entrance, Agent Crawford."

The man heaved a sigh of frustration before following Hannibal. "Did you hear a word I just said? You could actually be in a lot of danger right now."

Hannibal didn't break stride while walking. "And just what would you propose as a solution?"

"We could take Will somewhere safe until we've caught this guy."

"Will will not like this idea." Not to mention the fact that with the current level of competency, Hannibal knew it would be many years before anyone in the FBI came close to finding him. He was not about to have Will sent off in an attempt to 'protect' himself. He would never see Will again if that happened.

"Look, the Ripper is fixated on the kid! I feel sorry for him, but your life could be in real danger if he stays with you. We disagree when it comes to Will, but I like you and don't want to come to a crime scene and find your body there."

"I have no plans to become a victim of the Ripper."

"Neither did Ms. Buchanan." Jack replied as they turned a corner. He looked like he wanted to say more, but he had spotted Will and his temporary guardian. He didn't seem to want Will

knowing anything about this crime. Will was on his feet the moment he saw them approaching.

“Hannibal!” Will ran into Hannibal and wrapped his arms around him, like he was worried the man would vanish. “I couldn’t wait in the car, I’m sorry.”

“It is alright, I should not have left you alone.” He detached the boy from his torso, and grabbed Will's hand instead. “Shall we get going?”

“I’m going to get back to work. I’ll see you later, Will.” Beverly ruffled Will’s hair before grabbing the arm of the agent still standing by the trees. She got a few feet before yelling back to Hannibal. “Hey, take care of him alright?” She rounded the corner and dispeared from view.

The walk back to the car was a silent one, with Jack seemingly unwilling to talk while Will was around and Will trying to fight off whatever bad memories the crime scene had brought up. Hannibal felt a bit guilty for having brought up such memories, but it was too late to change what had been done. Besides, he still felt that the benefits of getting rid of Ms. Buchanan still outweighed the negative effects it had. He would make it up to Will in some other way later on.

They got to the car without issue and cleared a path out to the main road for Hannibal to take. He was about to drive away when Jack Crawford appeared at his window. “Dr. Lecter, promise me you’ll think about what I was saying earlier.” He seemed genuinely concerned about what might happen to Hannibal. Under different circumstances, he may have found it amusing, but today it was keeping him from taking Will away from painful memories.

Hannibal responded in what he believed was the quickest way to dispatch Jack Crawford. He agreed to do as he was told. “I will, feel free to call me if you wish to discuss things more.” With that, Hannibal continued the drive back home. He tried to make conversation with Will, but the boy replied to each question in as few words as possible before going back to staring out the window. Hannibal was worried about what being at the crime scene had done to Will’s mental state.

The silence continued when they reached the house. Will’s mood barely improved at all when Sadie greeted them at the door. He went straight to bed, despite still being fully clothed and not having bathed first. Any other day, Hannibal would have made correcting such habits a prority, but tonight was special. He instead went through his own nightly rituals before finding a book and patiently waiting in his own bedroom. He was expecting company soon.

He was rewarded a little over an hour later when a timid knock sounded on his door. Hannibal opened it to find a very upset Will clutching Winston and looking like he had just woken up from a new nightmare. “Can we talk for a while?”

This happened whenever Will had a particularly bad dream, which had been becoming less frequent, but Hannibal sensed that they would begin increasing once more after the day’s events. “Of course, you can talk to me about anything” He ushered Will in and sat him in the bed. “Now, what is bothering you, Will?”

“It’s really dumb…” Will began after spending a few moments smoothing out Winston’s fur. “It’s about Ms. Buchanan.” He suddenly seemed reluctant to speak, something that did not happen often when Will showed up at Hannibal’s door.

“Come now, I would never consider anything you said dumb.” Hannibal began to run his fingers through Will’s hair, an action he had learned almost instantly calmed him. Hannibal guessed that such gentle actions were a rare thing when Will had been living with his father. “Please tell me what is wrong.”

Will leaned into the soothing touch for a few moments before responding. “Did she really die because of me?” Will’s voice was strained, and Hannibal realized he was trying not to cry. “I don’t want to be the reason people got killed. What if he tries to hurt you next?”

Hannibal was touched and a bit amused. Will wasn’t worried about himself but what the Ripper might do to Hannibal. “Oh, my dear Will. I can not tell you why Ms. Buchanan died, only the Ripper can know such things. I can only tell you that everything will be alright.”

Will brought his knees up to his chest and hugged them. “Jack Crawford thinks I should go into hiding. He said the Ripper must be fixating on me or something like that. How do you know I won’t have to go away?”

Hannibal had thought that he and Jack were too far away for him to have heard their conversation, but he was wrong. It appeared that Will had exceptional hearing, he would need to remember that. “Uncle Jack can not force you to leave. Despite what he may claim, his power does not extend that far. Besides, that this was related to you is only speculation. The FBI looks for any connections between these cases, and many ideas turn out to be false.”

“But, what if they’re right? I don’t want a serial killer following me around. I’m…” Will’s voice broke off, but Hannibal knew what word was meant. *Scared*. His poor Will was scared of him, or at least part of him. That was unacceptable.

Hannibal grabbed Will’s chin and tilted his head up until their eyes locked. “You should not be afraid. Nothing will ever hurt you again as long as I am here. Do you understand, Will? You are safe.” He let enough of his mask slip so that Will could read the depths of his conviction. Apparently, Will was reassured by what he saw. He realeased his legs before grasping Hannibal’s arm and squeezing.

“You’ll keep all the nightmares away, right?”

“I would keep the entire world away if you asked it.” Those words should have frightened Will, would have frightened him when they first met, but now they brought a look of relief to his face instead.

“Can I stay here tonight?” The question was so quite, Hannibal almost didn't hear it.

“Of course you may.” Hannibal resumed his petting of Will’s hair. “What better place is there to chase away monsters and nightmares?” Will let out a contented sigh at the touch and rested his head on Hannibal’s shoulders, content to spend the rest of the night there. He had no more nightmares that night.

Dad

Chapter Summary

Hannibal finds himself in charge of another child. Will is not happy.

Chapter Notes

So...spoiler for anyone who isn't in college, midterms are really hard. They also take up a hell of a lot of time.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Today was a day that Hannibal had to remind himself that he needed patience when dealing with his clients. They just needed a little help and guidance to repair their lives. Sometimes that meant they got over attached to him, like Franklyn, or they made inappropriate requests, like the woman sitting in the chair opposite him.

“Oh please, it would only be for three days. You know how important this interview could be for my future.” The blonde woman sitting across from Hannibal was all but begging at this point. Lucinda Everret, married at nineteen and divorced within the first year of the marriage. One child at home. Currently recovering from an alcohol addiction. She was one of the few patients whose company Hannibal could actually enjoy on occasion.

Hannibal tried to remember that as he attempted to calm her down. “I feel this comes close to breaching our professional relationship, Ms. Everret. Is there no one that could help you instead?”

She began to wave her arms around as she responded to the question. “You know the answer to that. I wouldn’t trust my family with a goldfish, and I am not leaving poor Ruby with her father! The man’s in jail every other day!” Her movements became more animated as she spoke. “And my neighbors? Forget it. I don’t need to tell you about what I caught the Millers doing two weeks ago, do I?”

“No no, I doubt I shall ever forget *that* tale.” Hannibal had no desire to hear about anyone living in Lucinda’s apartment ever again after that tale.

“Then you’ll do it?”

“I do not believe that is what I said, Lucinda.”

She crossed her arms and Hannibal was reminded on a child who wasn't getting her way; a fairly accurate description of the woman some days. "You know I have no one to leave Ruby with. You are the most responsible person I know. This job could really be a turning point for me." Watery brown eyes met his own. "I need to get this job. They want to take Ruby away from me if I can't find work that pays better. Please."

Hannibal's resolve softened. It was a very unusual request for a patient to make, but he found his thoughts drifting to Will. He would do a great many unusual things to keep Will by his side. "You said this trip would be three days?"

The young woman suddenly jumped to attention at his words. "Yes! I swear that she'll be a perfect little angel! Please say that you'll help me out!"

"I will look after your daughter until you return from the interview."

"Thank you!" Hannibal suddenly found himself wrapped in a surprisingly strong bear hug. He had to remind himself yet again that she was one of the few patients that he could tolerate.

"So, how long is she going to be here?" Will was less than pleased to hear about the guest that would be arriving.

"Only three days. You should look at this as a way to increase your social skills."

Will made a small groaning noise. "But she's five. And a girl."

Hannibal could never understand why something as trivial as gender could determine if someone was worthy of speaking to. "Neither of those are valid reasons to dislike a person you have never met."

Will had to think for a moment before responding. "Well, where's she gunna stay? I'm already in the guestroom."

"There is one guestroom remaining that she can stay in." Hannibal had hoped that Will would be less upset about sharing their home with another. It was only going to be for a short time after all.

"Alright, as long as she doesn't yell at Sadie…" Reluctance was evident in Will's voice, something Hannibal noted but chose not to comment on. Will was a good child, and would no doubt be on his best behavior when their guest arrived the next day.

Ruby needed to leave. She'd only been here for two days, and Will hated her. Well, maybe hate wasn't the right word; but she still needed to leave. Since the moment she had arrived, all she'd done was cling to Hannibal. Everywhere Hannibal went, a pink dress and blonde hair

followed a few steps behind. Hannibal didn't seem to mind it, but Will did. Hannibal didn't have time to spend with Will anymore, he was much too busy entertaining his new favorite guest. The girl had also managed to become Sadie's favorite person in the house as well, leaving Will all alone. She was trying to take away all the things that Will was attached to while she was staying with them.

Will added invading the kitchen to the rapidly growing list of reasons why he didn't like Ruby. He had heard the sound of a knife chopping and had come to see what was being made only to find Ruby already in the kitchen sitting in his stool. It was too tall for her to have gotten up it on her own, which meant that Hannibal would have helped her up. She was leaning forward onto the table to try and get a better view of what Hannibal was doing and didn't even notice that Will had come in. Being ignored by her was also added to the list.

Will walked over to Ruby and scowled at her. "That's my spot."

She looked down from her seat, finally noticing Will. "No it's not, I got here first."

"It's my chair and I want to sit there."

"Alright." She replied before jumping off it. Will was startled but pleased by how easily she gave up her position. He was less pleased when he watched Ruby walk over to where Hannibal was cooking and grinned at the man. "I'll help Daddy cook instead!" She wrapped her arms around the man's waist, surprising both Will and Hannibal. The motion was enough to cause Hannibal's cutting to graze the side of his thumb. Seeing the blood, she quickly let go of him and clasped her hands behind her back instead. "I'm sorry."

Hannibal examined the shallow wound before assuring the child that he wasn't upset with her. "That is alright, but I will need to clean this before finishing the meal. I will be back in a moment."

Will found his hands balling into fists as his anger rose. Ruby was clearly trying to take away Hannibal. He wasn't her father, she already had one, and now she was trying to take Will's place. He grabbed her arm and pushed her up against the kitchen wall before he even knew what he was doing. Will only knew that she needed to leave Hannibal alone.

"What are you doing?" Will growled at the girl pinned against the wall.

She whimpered at the sudden rough treatment. "What do you mean?" Ruby's voice jumped several octaves as she stared at Will with a look of utter confusion.

"You called Hannibal your dad."

The look of confusion left her face. "Yeah, he's nice and can make me lots of cake if I ask him. He's a good Daddy!"

Frustration built up in Will. Hannibal couldn't be her dad. "Go find your own dad. Hannibal's *my* dad, not yours."

Tears began to leak out of her eyes as her face scrunched up. “You’re a big bully! I’m going to tell!”

“Tell me what?” Hannibal asked, suddenly emerging from the doorway. He surveyed the children before looking at Will. “Did you upset Ruby, William? That is a terribly rude thing to do.”

“But, it’s not my fault!” Will knew that was the wrong response by the way Hannibal frowned slightly at him before grabbing him by the shoulder.

“Please excuse us for a little while, Ruby, William and I need to have a quick talk.”

Will scowled as he was led away while Ruby stuck out a tongue at him.

Hannibal knew that he needed to scold Will. A good parent wouldn’t let their child talk to another child like that, especially one younger than them. But all he could think about was that Will had called him ‘my dad.’ In truth, all Hannibal truly wanted to do was listen to Will call him Dad for the rest of the day. It was an infinitely more pleasant way to spend his time, but that would need to wait. First, Will needed to know that what he had done was not acceptable.

“William,” he began, “why did you make Ruby cry? Surely you know that is no way to treat a lady.”

Will crossed his arms and became interested in his shoes. “It was her fault, not mine.”

“William…” Hannibal did his best to sound stern, although all he could think about at the moment was how protective the boy was of him.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to make Ruby cry, really.”

“Would you like to tell me what the problem was? You have been upset with Ruby since her arrival.”

Will's shoes were tracing some unknown design into the floor as he spoke, eyes still glued to the floor. “She’s just...I dunno, she makes me worry.”

That was not the response Hannibal was expecting. “Worry about what?”

“That you’re trying to replace me.” Will was steadfastly avoiding Hannibal’s gaze.

“Replace you? Why would I ever wish to do that?”

“Ruby’s normal, and you like having her here.” Will’s voice got quieter as he went on. “Plus, she doesn’t have serial killers chasing her. She’d be better for you.”

Understanding dawned on Hannibal. “Young Miss Everret is here because her mother is trying to get a job at a place very far away from here. If all goes well, the pair will end up moving out of the state, I doubt we would meet again after that.” Hannibal put a hand under Will’s chin so that he would be forced to make eye contact. “She is only staying here for a few days, not forever.”

Will broke free of Hannibal's hold and looked away again. The man had to strain his hearing to make out what Will's mumbled reply. "Yeah, but I was only going to be here for a little while to."

"Yes, but Ruby is here because a patient had no one else to turn to. She is not going to replace you, no one ever could."

Will balled his hands into fists as words suddenly came pouring out of his mouth. “But all she does is follow you around and you let her into the kitchen and she was going to help you cook and she sat in my spot and she called you Dad!”

Hannibal was touched that he was so jealous of the girl. Jealousy was a good way to measure attachment to things after all. “I allowed her into the kitchen because she seems to wish to spend every waking hour with me and sending her away would have been rude. As for the cooking, Ruby is not going to be helping me. That will remain something only we share.” A small smile started to form on Will’s face. “You were upset because she called me Dad?”

“Yeah, but you’re not.” Will sounded quite petulant as a frown replaced the beginnings of his smile. Hannibal couldn't help the amusement he felt at how strongly Will was sticking to that point.

“No, I am not, and Ruby should not call a man she just met her father. The only one who will get to use that word is you." He paused to see if his words had any effect on Will before going on. "Are you feeling better now?”

Will chewed to bottom of his lip for a moment, a habit Hannibal made a mental note to train him out of, before replying. “I’m alright, she’s going to leave tomorrow anyway, right?”

“Yes, I do not imagine we will be seeing Ruby for a long time after that. Now, I believe that you owe our guest an apology.”

Will pouted before asking, “Do I have too?”

“A gentleman should never begrudge having to apologize to a person.” The lightly scolding tone let Will know that this was not a point that could be argued over.

Will sighed before nodding. “Fine.”

It wasn’t a very polite response to such a simple request, but it would do for now. Seeing Will so possessive of him was surprisingly endearing, so the lack of manners was easily pushed to the back of Hannibal’s mind. He gave Will one brief appraising look to measure the honestly of his words before heading towards the door trusting Will to follow him back to the kitchen.

“Wait!” Will’s hand was wrapped gingerly around the sleeve of Hannibal’s suit. The awkwardness that so often plagued the boy when talking to strangers reared its head as he stood there trying to force a question out of his mouth. “Is it...is it ok if I call you Dad sometimes?”

Joy coursed through Hannibal. Will wanted to call him Dad. Hannibal had thought that perhaps the outburst in the kitchen had been driven purely by jealousy and that Will was not ready to attach that label to a new man yet; but it seemed that the change had already happened in Will’s head some time ago. He felt oddly honored that Will not only was willing to address him as such, but that he’d ask permission first. He could be quite polite when he chose to be.

“Of course you may. You have been able to for several weeks now.”

Will’s eyes shone as he met Hannibal’s. Eventually, a shy smile began forming around his face. “Thanks...Dad.”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry it took so long to update, college takes time!

If you do want to yell/suggest ideas/chat with me just drop a line to me in the comments or on tumblr. This chapter was actually based on an idea I got from a message.

azvee.tumblr.com

Guilt and Gifts

Chapter Summary

In which Hannibal most definitely does not feel guilt.

Chapter Notes

So I wait about two weeks to upload a chapter and then put a new one up within days of the next one. Sounds about right.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal was not feeling guilty. He was a man incapable of such emotions; he had no need for them. There was no hidden motivations behind giving Will so many presents. Will simply deserved to get gifts. Someone as gifted mentally surely deserved physical gifts as well. Will deserved the finest that life had to offer.

The fact that nightmares were once again plaguing Will's dreams almost every night now didn't factor into this. Hannibal would gladly have killed Ms. Buchanan several times over without hesitation. The world was better off without her in it. True, Will's recent bouts of sleeplessness stemmed from the fear that finding her corpse had brought back out, but Hannibal still couldn't bring himself to regret the choice. Forcing Will to interact with that woman would have been cruel. At least, that's what he kept telling himself whenever Will woke up crying from a particularly bad nightmare. The fact that those dreams often involved Hannibal falling prey to the Ripper like Ms. Buchanan had did nothing to soothe the odd sensation, that was *not guilt*, growing within him.

He hadn't meant for Will to learn what had happened to his former caseworker, it had been an accident. Jack Crawford was really to blame for that though, the man had picked a very inopportune time to call him. If all had gone according to the plan in Hannibal's head, Will would never have found out the fate of the woman. Hannibal was simply being forced to deal with the fallout from Jack's staggering incompetence.

Besides, Will needed more personal belongings. His father had either not had the money or was simply unwilling to spend any more than what was required on his son. When all of Will's possessions had been returned from the FBI they were able to be transported in just two boxes. Most of it had been old worn-out clothing that Hannibal had decided would vanish and be replaced with things much more fitting for Will to wear. The boy's room still looked as if a guest was simply spending a few days visiting instead of actually living there.

The new items should help foster a sense of belonging and were *absolutely not* an attempt to distract Will from the dark thoughts that followed him to bed.

It had started with small things, dirty jeans with holes replaced with the sort of pants Will only ever worn to church, a fluffy robe and new pajamas placed at the foot of his bed, one of those polaroid cameras that spat out the film was found beneath his bedside lamp. Several books like *The Phantom Tollbooth* and C. S. Lewis's stories also started to fill up his shelves as the days went by. Little things like that didn't bother Will too much. But then the gifts started to get bigger and more expensive. He found a very well-kept original print of *The Hobbit* nestled in with his books one day. An antique globe he had been mesmerized by while shopping with Hannibal turned up in his room the following day as well as several old star charts. Even a brand new laptop and an mp3 player had found new homes on his table. Not to mention the dog.

Will wasn't used to getting so many things. When his father had extra cash, it never went towards gifts for Will. They didn't have that kind of money. Dr. Bloom's gifts had been more than enough to keep him happy for a long time. He didn't know how to react to suddenly getting so much from Hannibal.

It was almost like the man was trying to apologize for doing something wrong. But, Will couldn't think of anything that Hannibal had done. Yet, he had managed to catch a few brief glimpses beneath Hannibal's mask and found guilt there. It made no sense and only confused Will even more.

Hannibal and Will were working in the kitchen. Today was going to be a seafood day, something that Hannibal found Will enjoyed immensely. Anything that came from some body of water instantly became a dish worthy of praise in the boy's eyes. The fact that this was the fourth in a row of nonhuman dishes Will favored was pure coincidence and not a silent apology. It simply gave him more time to teach Will about cooking. Today Will was learning how to separate the yolks from eggs without breaking the shell. It was something that he would need more practice with if the current results were anything to judge by, but that was alright. Hannibal had all the time in the world for his Will. The boy seemed to have his mind on other matters today, only half listening to the instructions given to him. Eventually, Hannibal gave up talking and waited for Will to ask whatever question was bothering him.

"Hey, why are you buying me so many things?"

So, Will had noticed. It was actually quite obvious looking back. Hannibal would need to be more subtle about his actions in the future. "You are a good child and you deserve good

things. Just because you did not have such things before staying with me does not mean you should not have them now."

"But...some of that stuff looks really expensive…" Worry laced Will's words as he tried to carefully pick them out of his head.

"I am not about to go broke."

Will made a face. "I know that."

Hannibal put down the bowl his was mixing spices in to give Will his full attention. "Well then, what is the problem?"

"I just think that I don't need all the stuff you've been giving me."

"You may not need it, but you deserve it."

"You haven't done anything wrong, you know." Hannibal couldn't help the brief look of surprise he sent Will at being called out for his actions. "I don't know what you're trying to apologize for, if that's what you're doing."

Hannibal forgot how sharp his Will could be at times. He was truly unique. "I feel as if I am to blame for your nightmares." He decided to tell half-truths in the hopes that Will would be satisfied and not dig deeper into the matter. Some answers would raise more troublesome questions. "You would be sleeping soundly if I had not taken you to that crime scene."

"But that wasn't your fault. I should have stayed in the car like you said."

"Bringing you there in the first place was not what a responsible parent should have done. If I had behaved less rashly after getting that phone call, you would never have seen that body."

"I don't blame you for that."

"And I am grateful for that. But, I blame myself still."

"Every parent makes mistakes sometimes, but that doesn't mean they're bad parents. You're a really good Dad and you shouldn't feel bad because of a mistake."

Dad. Even though it had been a week since Will had started calling him it, the word still made Hannibal feel as if he were floating. It took him a moment to bring his mind back to their conversation. "I think that feeling bad about their shortcomings is part of a parent's job. We worry about our children when we fail to protect them."

"You don't need to buy me things to feel better." The determined look that was appearing more often on Will's face meant that they would be arguing for a long time and dinner would end up being delayed. That outcome was unacceptable, so Hannibal was forced to concede at least a partial victory to Will if he hoped to finish soaking the oysters in their sauce before they finished thawing out.

“Alright, any gifts you get from me will not be to fix my guilt. They will be because I want to give you a gift." Hannibal still needed to finish upgrading Will's wardrobe after all. He couldn't have him running about in anything less than the best.

They resumed their work for a while until Will spoke up again. “Oh, and next time you steal my old pants, can you get me some jeans? I don’t want to get the nice ones you keep trying to sneak in dirty."

Hannibal looked at Will's smug grin and let out a laugh.

Chapter End Notes

I believe the end is in sight my friends. I have plotted out the chapters till the end of our little journey together...so if there's anything you absolutely need to see before this ends, now is the time to ask. I make no promises, but this baby is going to end one soon, so if you don't act now, you'll be too late.

Come chat me up in the comments or on tumblr. I could use the company.
azvee.tumblr.com

Dog Park

Chapter Summary

Hannibal and Will go to the park for a much needed break.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will was practically bursting apart with impatience as he waited for Hannibal to park the car. He was leaning out the window trying to get a better view of the scene before him. “Head in the car, Will.” Hannibal reminded him.

“Can’t I get out here?” Will asked for the third time. “We’re practically there right now, please?”

“You will not die if we wait another minute to park the car.” Hannibal couldn’t help but smile at the groan Will let out as he reluctantly settled back down in his seat. It was odd that something that should have inspired ire from Hannibal brought out fondness when it’s source was Will.

“Now can I go?” He asked as soon as the car stopped moving. He was out in seconds as soon as Hannibal nodded. “Come on, Sadie! Let’s go!” Will was on his feet and out the door with the dog bouncing along behind him.

Hannibal made a mental note to thank Ms. Katz for telling him about this park as he watched Will take off with Sadie. The boy had an obsession with dogs, that much was clear to anyone who talked to him. The furry creatures were no doubt much easier for Will to get along with than people were. It might be the fact that such failures to connect with normal people was part of the reason that Will stayed so firmly bonded to Hannibal. The reason behind his attachment to the animals really didn't matter at the moment. All that Hannibal cared about was that the sun was out and that he and Will could enjoy a day outside.

Taking out an old book, Hannibal sat down on a nearby bench to catch up on some reading. He’d been falling behind on his book list since meeting Will. Spending time with Will was more than a fair trade, but Hannibal still wanted to finish the book.

“First time at the dog park?” Hannibal looked up from his book to see an older woman standing before him with a cocker spaniel by her side. He offered her a polite smile.

“How could you tell?”

She motioned to her dog. “Dolly and I can always pick out the newcomers. I’m Evangeline. So, where’s your pup?”

“My dog is off exploring the park with Will.” He realized belatedly that this woman would have no idea who Will was. The slip in manners was a new experience for him.

“Ah, you’ve got two young pups then.” She replied with a smile, seeming to understand Hannibal despite his momentary slip. “My grandkids love coming here, everyone is friendly so you don’t need to worry ‘bout anything.”

“Would you like to sit for a moment?” He asked, patting the seat next to him. It was only polite to make such an offer after all.

"Thanks, the two of us aren’t as young as we used to be. You don’t need to worry about entertaining us, I just like to sit and watch the world go by.”

The next hour was passed mostly in silence between the two, with Hannibal reading while Evangeline patted her dog and occasionally calling another person over for a talk. Apparently, she was one of the regulars at the park. The relative calm continued until Will reappeared with Sadie in tow.

“You won’t believe what we saw!” Will cried as he and the pup came bounding over. “There was a tibetan mastiff! They’re almost impossible to find around here!”

“So, these are your two then?” Evangeline asked with a smile. Will seemed to notice that they were not alone and shrank into himself a bit. “Awww don’t worry, I don’t bite. I leave that up to Dolly.”

“Will, this is Evangeline.” Hannibal offered.

“Hi.” Will mumbled with a weak wave.

She laughed before responding with a grin. “You are a shy one, aren’t you?”

Will steadfastly refused to look at her and instead fixated on the small dog sleeping under the bench. “How old is your dog?”

“I’ll tell you what, we’ll trade information. I’ll tell you about Dolly Parton here if you tell me about your little ball of fur.”

“Alright…” Will hesitantly agreed, his need to learn more about the dog overriding his need to shy away from strangers. Hannibal had hoped that this would be the result of bringing Will to the park. He needed practice interacting with others if he was ever going to properly enter society one day.

Thankfully, Evangeline seemed to understand that Will was someone who needed patience when it came to getting him to talk. Perhaps it was just her age, but she never rushed or pushed Will to talk more or asked him about anything that Will had not volunteered. They didn’t talk about anything other than the dogs, but Hannibal still considered it progress. The talk lasted until Evangeline excused herself so she could take her “old bones” back home to rest.

“She was nice.” Will commented as Evangeline and Dolly walked away. When they disappeared behind some trees, he turned his attention to the book Hannibal was currently reading. “What are you reading?”

“An old book.”

Will looked at the book’s cover. “It isn’t written in English.”

Hannibal looked up from the pages to see Will staring at him, looking for an answer to his unasked question. “No, it is written in Lithuanian, my native language.”

“What’s it about?” Will asked as he grabbed Sadie so they could both sit on the newly emptied bench seat.

“A young man trying to make his way in the world with the help of several spirits.” That was a very bare bones summary, but the book was really not one that Will could understand.

“Huh.” Will looked over Hannibal’s shoulder at the book. “It still looks a lot like English. Was it hard to learn another language?”

“I have actually learned several, but English is one of the hardest languages to learn. You should consider yourself lucky to know it already.”

“Can you read it out loud?” Hannibal looked at Will, more than a little surprised. Most people would ignore or even scorn someone for speaking a language they did not understand. Will, on the other hand, seemed genuinely interested in hearing what another language sounded like. He couldn't think of any reason not to read out loud, and it had been a long time since he had spoken in his own language.

Hannibal cleared his throat before starting on the next chapter. His voice seemed to turn to gold as he spoke, the accent he carried while speaking English smoothed as it joined back with it’s native tongue. The words carried no real meaning to Will, but he could sense the weight of each one by the amount of emphasis that was placed on each sound that came out of Hannibal’s mouth. He sat on the bench in absolute silence until Hannibal decided to stop his reading. Will looked oddly disappointed by the stop.

“Could you teach me a bit of Lithuanian?” Will asked after a moment of silent deliberation.

Hannibal was caught off guard yet again. “Really?”

“If you don’t mind...I think it would be nice to learn your language.” Will appeared nothing but sincere in his request, and Hannibal was more than happy to oblige him. Sharing the same language was something most parents and their children had in common after all.

“I would love to teach you.” Hannibal meant it. He wanted to share what he knew with Will. Will’s face broke out into a grin at the words.

“Aren’t you going to finish reading that chapter?” Will asked, scooting closer to Hannibal. Hannibal allowed a burst of warmth fill him as Will looked at him expectantly. He turned

back to his book and started where he had left off while Will listened to his voice ebb and flow from syllable to syllable.

Chapter End Notes

They need a quite day every now and then. It can't all be dead bodies and unwanted company.

So, warning that this story is going to enter it's final act within the next few chapters. If you want any fluff, now is the time to act. Come bug me in the comments or on tumblr. I can't promise I'll use your idea, but I do give them all thought.
azvee.tumblr.com

Storm

Chapter Summary

Hannibal gets some good news while the weather takes a turn for the worse.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The leaves were starting to change color. Will was looking out the window as a strong breeze torn through the branches. The sense of unease grew as he glanced up at the dark clouds above the treetops; a bad storm was supposed to come today. When it did finally start to pour, Will wanted to be inside Hannibal's strong brick house, not in the car or stuck in the social services building.

He didn't want to be in this building at all. It was full of tired workers and anxious people, all of them just waiting for Will to get stuck inside their heads. He didn't even know why they were really here, Bessie had been doing all her evaluations from their home. Nothing had gone wrong, Hannibal would have told Will if there was a problem. This entire trip seemed pointless to Will. He didn't even get to stay with Hannibal while they were here. He'd been left in the small waiting room outside a stranger's office while the adults talked about things.

Steadfastly ignoring the secretary typing away, Will continued to watch the sky darken. He really didn't want to get stuck in the rain.

Inside the office, Hannibal was talking with Elizabeth and her supervisor, a Mr. Josh Jacobson. The man seemed pleasant enough, even if his taste in clothing appeared to be on the cheap end. Josh seemed like a man that laughed easy and wanted the world to laugh with him. He was already on Hannibal's good side as the man had just given him very good news.

"So, his mother has ceded her rights as a parent?" Hannibal had known this would be the most likely outcome, but he needed to get a verbal confirmation first. Will's mother was the last obstacle standing between him and his adoption of Will. Trying to get Will back with his only remaining parent was what the social service agency was meant to do before giving the child away.

"Yeah, this really should have been taken care of sooner, but we had to track her down. She actually didn't believe us when we told her about what had happened."

Hannibal gave Josh an understanding nod. "It does make for a very strange tale."

“She was hoping that there was some cash attached to Will because of the FBI, but we told her that wasn’t the case. She agreed to give up Will after finding that out.” Distaste filled the man’s voice as he explained, clearly disapproving of the woman’s actions.

“She clearly does not care for Will at all.” Will’s mother was lucky she was not easily accessible to Hannibal. She would have earned herself a spot on the dinner table if he were close enough to get to her.

“Such a shame, he’s real sweet once you get him talking. But, I suppose you already know that.” Elizabeth sent a bright grin towards Hannibal while Josh tried to stop the conversation from getting derailed.

“We’ve sent off some forms to finalize things with his mother, so as long as they’ve filled out quickly, you should be able to finish your adoption within the next few weeks.”

“Isn’t it great?” Elizabeth was practically bouncing in her seat. “I mean; I’m going to miss seeing you two, but now you can start to really be a family.”

“You’ll have to excuse Bessie, you’re actually her first completed assignment here.”

“Josh, you didn’t need to tell him that!” She cried and slapped the man’s arm while he twirled a handlebar mustache.

“I can understand your excitement. Having a passion for your work is a good thing.”

“See, Mr. Lecter is a gentleman. You should try being one every now and then.” She swatted his arm again.

“Hey, remember that I’m the one in charge here, not the other way around.” He replied before turning his attention back towards Hannibal. “I do have a bit of final paperwork here to fill out if you’re willing to stick around. It’s mostly just a quick overview of what Bessie has put down about you and your house. Shouldn’t take too long.”

Rain was pelting the window glass when Hannibal reemerged from the room. Whatever had been talked about must have been good. Will could tell he was pleased with whatever had been discussed. The thought did nothing to lift Will’s spirits though.

“It’s raining out.” He stated.

“Well, that is why we brought rain coats with.” Hannibal replied as he handed Will a jacket.

“The storm is supposed to to pretty bad.”

“I didn’t know you were into the weather.” Elizabeth said, trying to start a conversation with him.

“I don’t think Sadie is happy right now.” Will said to Hannibal, ignoring Elizabeth’s comment. Hannibal chose to overlook Will’s lack of social graces for the moment.

“Why do you think that?”

“Dogs don’t like storms, or at least the small ones don’t.”

Hannibal offered the boy a reassuring smile before starting towards the door. “We will be home soon, she will have to survive until then.” Will quickly followed him out but not, Hannibal noted, before casting another worried look at the window.

The wind howled outside as hail hit the house. Will held a hand up to the glass and shivered at the cold. The little garden that Hannibal’s neighbor had was going to be ruined by the weather. Sadie let out a whine from beneath Will. “I know, it looks really bad.” He picked up the small dog and nuzzled her fur.

They stood there watching the storm and listening to the sound of thunder until Hannibal entered the room. The scent of something sweet entered the room with him, and Will found his curiosity winning over the desire to watch the storm.

“What’s that?” Will asked as he gestured towards the mugs that Hannibal was carrying.

“Hot Chocolate. I thought today was a good day for some.” He set a mug down on the table before approaching Will with the other one. “You should have some. The homemade kind is always better than anything you buy in a store.”

Will was going to argue, but Hannibal’s eyes told him that he was going to end up taking the drink. Putting Sadie down, he took the warm cup from Hannibal. “Thanks, but I don’t really drink cocoa when it’s not snowing outside.”

“You have never had my hot chocolate before though.” Hannibal replied as he wandered about his office, looking through his book shelves. “I can guarantee that this drink is not just a seasonal one. Come sit. Staring out the window is not going to make the storm pass any faster.”

Will shuffled over to one of the chairs placed in the office and took a seat. His gaze stayed on the window and the small bits of ice hitting it. “Try the hot chocolate; I would like to know if I added too much cream.” Hannibal said while pulling two books from the shelf. Will still didn’t know how the man could tell if he’d done something without looking, but that was a question for another day.

Will took a small sip and had to remind himself not to down the entire drink in one gulp. It was far better than the packets that his old father would occasionally bring home from the store. This had just the right amount of dark chocolate melted in with milk and cream to

create a sweet but not overwhelming combination. He could taste just a hint of nutmeg and vanilla as well. He wrapped his hands around the drink with a content sigh.

He sat there sipping the drink and listening to the wind blow until he felt a weight placed on his shoulders. Hannibal had draped a blanket over Will's shoulder as he continued to walk around the room with Sadie following at his heels. Will wrapped the blanket around himself while he followed Hannibal with his eyes. He watched as Hannibal paused in front of a sound system and pressed several buttons. The soft sound of violins drifted through the room.

Hannibal looked over the shelves one final time before sitting in the chair opposite Will and opening one of the books. "Stories from a Thousand and One Arabian Nights." Hannibal announced before starting to read the first chapter aloud.

"What are you doing?" A confused Will asked, interrupting Hannibal's reading.

"Reading aloud."

Will let out an irritated huff. "I know that; *why* are you reading out loud?"

"You find it relaxing, I thought you could use a distraction."

"I'm not scared of storms you know." Will mumbled from within his blanket cocoon. A crack of thunder filled the room, and Will jumped. A slight blush tinted his face when he realized what he had just done. "This one is just really bad."

"That is quite alright. Bad weather can make even the strongest person uneasy." Hannibal said in a reassuring voice before picking up where he left off in the book.

Will wanted to argue more, really he did, but it was getting hard to form thoughts. Everything was getting a little fuzzy, like the blanket. After taking another sip of his hot cocoa, he decided that getting upset about being babied could wait. Right now, all he wanted to do was relax. The wind and thunder had faded away and were replaced by soft music and Hannibal's steady voice. The storm seemed very far away from him now, stuck behind a wall of warmth and sound.

He could no longer make out exactly what words Hannibal was saying, but the steady accent continued to lull Will further into a state of calm. The sense of unease that had been lying coiled inside Will since the start of the storm finally unwound and left him. With a small sigh, he curled up under the blanket and closed his eyes. The soft rumble of Hannibal's voice and the quiet music made them seem so heavy.

Hannibal looked up from his book to find Will sound asleep. Satisfied that Will would not be bothered by the storm, he shut the book. A slight frown appeared on his face as Sadie started to paw at Will's blankets with a low whine, no doubt seeking comfort as well.

He got to his feet and picked up the small dog. Sadie would wake him up if she kept making noises. “Will needs his rest; we should let him sleep.” The only way to keep her quiet seemed to be holding her close. No animals on the furniture had been one of the first rules Hannibal had set when they got the pup; but he wanted to stay with Will in case another nightmare began to plague him. After a moment of interal debate, he sat back down with the havanese pup.

“This will be our little secret, Sadie.” He said to the dog as it walked all over his lap to find the best spot to rest. Eventually she ended up sprawled across his legs wagging her tail as Hannibal absentmindedly rubbed her head. The day had been a good one he decided as he sat and watched Will’s chest rise and fall under the blanket. They stayed like that long after the weather had cleared.

Chapter End Notes

So, this chapter kind of got up and ran away from me. Will was going to bang his head in the rain, but about halfway through it changed into Will being scared of the storm instead.

Anyway, feel free to chat me up here or on tumblr.
azvee.tumblr.com

School

Chapter Summary

Will gets sent off to school and has to deal with being around other kids.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

This was one of the schools that Will's father wouldn't have liked. It wasn't like any of the public schools that Will had gone to over the years as he and his father moved around the country. This one had money behind it, it belonged to the rich people that Will was always warned to stay away from. If his father hadn't died, Will would never even be able to enter the front doors, much less actually enroll here. Now though, Will was being welcomed with open arms.

He still wasn't sure if he was happy about entering a new school. He was used to being the new kid but, at his old schools, Will had at least been able to hide in the crowd from most of the bullies. Here, he would be unable to do so. Hannibal had already heard this worry and replied that bullying was not allowed here. Besides; Will deserved better than the public education system. At least according to Hannibal he did.

"Do I have to go?" Will asked as he looked out the window. Several children were walking into the building laughing. "Can't I just stay home with you?"

"School is important, Will. As much as I enjoy spending time with you, getting an education must take precedence."

"But, Tėvas…" Will was using Lithuanian in hopes of persuading him. It wouldn't work, but Hannibal admired how quickly Will picked up the language. He spoke each word like a person that had been born there instead of one who had just started learning a second language. Hannibal guessed that Will's empathic gift was what led to him picking up on accents so quickly.

"You know that you must attend school."

Will seemed to shrink into himself. "Yeah...I know."

"You will be fine." Hannibal assured him while gently ushering Will out of the car. "Go, make some friends. You can tell me all about your day when I pick you up."

Will cast one last look at the car before heading into the building. He looked as if he were marching to his funeral.

Hannibal checked his watch, traffic had made him late. He'd promised Will that he would pick him up as soon as the school day had ended. He had not planned on being late on Will's first day at the new school. He knew that Will had difficulties when it came to interacting with others, especially children. It was something that the boy would need to overcome if he were to survive in the world on his own one day. But, today was not that day, and Hannibal wanted to make sure Will had made it through his first day in one piece.

Several other cars and a bus were already there when Hannibal pulled into the parking lot and surveyed the crowd. There was a large group of children being ushered onto the bus while the rest waited patiently for their own ride home to arrive. Try as he might, Hannibal could not pick out Will in the sea of children. He was saved from having to ask for help when a small body in a red jacket broke free from the rest of the group and started running towards him.

"Dad!" Will cried as he ran into Hannibal and wrapped him in a tight hug. Hannibal immediately worried about what might have happened.

"Did something go wrong?" The school had assured Hannibal that they did not tolerate bullying of any kind here. It would be very unfortunate for the principle if that turned out to be a lie. Will dispelled and further thoughts on the matter with a shake of his head.

"I just missed you." Will mumbled into his suit. It occurred to Hannibal that this was the first real separation from him that Will had experienced since his father's death. Hannibal had left Will to gather more meat for special dinners, but he had been left with either Alana or Beverly to watch over him. They were two people that Will knew and trusted to some degree. Here he knew no one. For a child with Will's disposition, the day must have seemed to last a lifetime.

"I missed you as well." Hannibal replied while opening the passenger seat. Will jumped into the open door and immediately shut it behind him.

"I don't want to go back." Will stated as soon as Hannibal got into the driver's side of the car.

"Why not?"

"There are too many people, there's too much happening. I see too much…" Will started playing with the zipper on his coat to avoid looking Hannibal in the eyes. "I can't handle so many people. I don't know how to talk to them; I'm not good at it like you are."

"No one starts off being good at talking to others. Practice makes you better."

"That might work for normal people." Will muttered as he sank into the seat.

“I had much the same problem you are having when I was a child.” Hannibal replied. His past was a delicate subject, one that should not be told in it’s entirety. But, Will needed a moral boost, and hearing a very small edited portion of his past might be enough to lift Will’s spirits. “My own upbringing made it difficult to speak with others my own age. It was quite lonely.”

“So what’d you do?”

“I learned that words are the keys to everything in life. They may not come easy, but they are needed. I learned this and practiced until I had mastered them. If you can learn to properly use your words, the world will bend for you instead of you bending for it.”

“That sounds kinda like you’re fighting the world.”

“That is what it feels like sometimes though.”

Will gave a small nod before mumbling, “I think it’ll make me break one day.”

“You are much stronger than you believe, Will. The world will move for you one day.”

“Really?”

“Yes, really.” And he did believe it. There was steel within Will that had let him survive his father and the Ripper’s attention. He had been damaged by both, but not broken. That was a feat that most adults could not accomplish, something that many of Hannibal’s patients could attest to.

Will seemed to sense that Hannibal was sincere and not simply trying to make Will feel better. A small smile appeared on his face as he sat just a little straighter in his seat.

“Now, was there anything interesting that happened today?” Hannibal asked as they sped towards home. Will happily filled the rest of the ride back with chatter about his new teachers and the food that wasn’t as good as Hannibal’s cooking. He decided at the end of the drive that he could go there at least a little longer.

Chapter End Notes

Tėvas = Father for those who don't google but would like to know.

Halloween

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal go trick-or-treating and Hannibal runs into a familiar face.

Chapter Notes

Hey! So, here is my special out of order story-wise Halloween chapter. When I'm finished with the story, I'll probably move it to a more appropriate spot on the timeline, but this request was too good to wait.

Obvious update: I've moved it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“No.” Hannibal gave the child standing before him the sternest look he could muster. Which was proving to be harder to do as Will’s face filled with disappointment.

“But, why not?”

“It is a trivial holiday that only exists to keep candy and costume companies in business.” Not to mention how the streets became full of drunks and perverts that Hannibal would not want Will within a mile of.

“That’s not what Halloween is about.” Will responded. “It’s about ghosts and having fun!”

“And candy.”

“Well...you do get candy from it.” Will hesitantly admitted. “But it’s just a lot of fun to go trick-or-treating.”

“The only people that benefit from that ‘fun’ in the end are the dentists. I would rather not give them the extra business.”

Will rocked back on his heels as he offered a tempting smile. “If you want, you could think of it as a gift.”

“I believe you were the one that told me that you no longer needed any more gifts.” Hannibal watched the disappointment reappear on Will’s face as he realized his obvious attempts at manipulation had failed. “Why do you want to go anyway? You know there are plenty of

fresh-made treats here, why would you want to wander in the cold for something that will not taste as good?"

"I haven't been able to go trick-or-treating for a while." Will's voice became noticeably flat as he explained. "My dad would tell me to stay home so he could go out drinking. I thought it would be nice to finally get to go."

Hannibal knew he had just lost their argument. He refused to be put on the same level as Will's former father. He was determined to prove himself as a better parent in every way possible, even if that meant participating in such a commercial holiday.

Will made an adorable Harry Potter, Hannibal mused as he watched the boy ring yet another doorbell. Several other children in costumes were leading their own parents around the brightly lit neighborhood. Although it admittedly wasn't as bad as Hannibal had thought; he hoped that Will would tire out soon. There didn't appear to be much chance of that happening anytime soon as Will bounded down the steps to Hannibal, his bag of candy bouncing as he moved.

"They gave out toy dinosaurs!" Will declared before fishing out a plastic Apatosaurus to show Hannibal.

"That was generous of them." He responded, not quite sure what the appropriate thing to say was in the situation. His reply seemed to please Will though, since he put the long necked dinosaur away with a grin. "Are you about ready to call it a night?"

The grin was gone as quickly as it came. "We haven't been out that long though. My bag's still practically empty." Will shook his bag to illustrate his point.

"Some people would argue that so much candy is bad for you."

"But it tastes so good!" Will replied before grabbing Hannibal's hand and starting towards the next house. "Besides, I'm not going to eat it all at once. That would be dumb."

"That would be very dumb indeed." Hannibal agreed with a smile. He felt a tug on his arm, signalling that he was not moving fast enough. "The other houses are not going to run out of candy if we walk, Will."

"I know, but going a little faster wouldn't hurt." Will gave another tug while bouncing lightly on his feet. Hannibal heaved an exaggerated sigh before picking up his pace ever so slightly, much to Will's delight.

They continued their slow walk down the street for about an hour before Hannibal broached the topic of going home yet again. The idea was met with the same level of resistance that it had been when first suggested.

“But there are still lots of houses left!”

“We have been out for almost two hours now, I believe you have enough candy to last until next year.”

“Just a few more blocks? Please?” Wide eyes that Hannibal still found almost impossible to resist looked up at him, silently pleading.

“Will, I am tired.” That was a lie, but Hannibal hoped that playing on Will’s sympathy might be the trick to getting him home.

“Oh, that’s ok.” Will responded. “You don’t have to come with, I can take care of myself afterall.”

“That is not a responsible thing to do. Now, come along.” Hannibal’s hand was on Will’s back before the boy had a chance to respond. Will let out several complaints and attempted to squirm away from Hannibal, but years of hunting people much larger and stronger kept Will from escaping the hand guiding him back to the car.

The pair had just reached the car when a familiar voice reached Hannibal’s ears. “Doctor Lecter?” Hannibal cringed when he heard the voice. “Oh my God, it is you! What are the odds?” Franklyn Froideveaux was jogging over to him wearing a very tacky looking Dracula costume.

“Good evening, Franklyn.” He responded with practiced formality. Will sent Hannibal a questioning gaze, sensing that he was not happy with this turn of events. “How are you tonight?”

The man beamed as Hannibal asked him about his night, clearly honored that he cared so much. “It’s been great! I’m actually out with my nephew, his parents are having a night on the town, so I’m watching him tonight.” He finally took notice of the small body next to Hannibal. “Are you watching a relative’s kid? I’ve never heard you talk about any family.” Franklyn sounded slightly offended that such information hadn’t been offered to him. Hannibal resisted the urge to dismember the man.

“Your hour is about you, Franklyn, not me.” Practiced patience filled his voice as he recited off a line that was being used much too often with Franklyn as of late. Hannibal’s voice became considerably warmer as he turned his attention to Will. “This is William, my son.” Will’s gaze shifted back to Hannibal’s as a blush filled his face.

“You have a kid?” Franklyn’s tone changed to a more jealous one as he looked at Will for any similarities between the two. Will squirmed a little under the gaze, obviously not liking being put under scrutiny. Hannibal was quick to come to his aid.

“That is what I just said; Will is my *adopted* son.”

“Ah. That’s really nice of you, Doctor. I swear, you’re practically a saint. I guess being good with kids is just one more thing we have in common!” The man sent a smile towards Hannibal before going on. “If you want, you and little Willy could join me and my nephew.”

He ruffled Will's hair in what he had hoped was a playful manner, but only succeeded in making both men frown at him while Hannibal held back the desire to snap the man's wrists. "We're just across the street…"

"Actually, we're going home now." Will responded before making a show of yawning. "We've been out for a while, and I'm really tired."

"Oh…" The round man seemed to visibly deflate before them. "Well, I wouldn't want you getting worn out…"

"I will see you in three days, Franklyn, have a Happy Halloween." Hannibal hoped that the man wouldn't try and follow them home. Franklyn wasn't above such behavior if it meant he could further his obsession with his therapist.

Luck seemed to be with Hannibal today, as a boy across the street in a ninja outfit started yelling at his uncle to hurry up. "I guess Jim is a little bored over there. I should get back to him. Maybe we could go out for ice cream sometime?" Franklyn paused before quickly adding, "The four of us I mean."

"I'm allergic to milk." Will lied. Hannibal had never been so proud of Will as he was at that moment. He shuffled Franklyn across the road and away from them before the man could think of other activities to do together.

"That was weird." Will stated as he opened the passenger door.

"That was my patient."

"Well, he was really clingy and I don't like him either."

Hannibal looked at Will surprised. "I never said I disliked the man."

"Yeah, but I can tell you don't want to deal with him anymore." Will's tone wasn't snide, but rather one that a person used when stating an absolute fact.

Hannibal was once again amazed by Will's intuitive mind. He had thought that he hid his disdain for the man better than that. Will made a very good way to test the strength of his mask. Will seemed to continually pick up more than Hannibal ever thought he was showing, letting Hannibal find the cracks in his mask in the process.

"Franklyn has grown much too attached to me as of late." Hannibal eventually replied. "I do not believe I can help the man much longer. His attachment is interfering with his progress."

"And you think he's annoying." Will added.

Hannibal let out a long-suffering sigh. "I find him...trying."

Will made a snorting sound. "That's just another word for annoying."

"Franklyn is a troubled man. He craves a companionship that I can not provide him."

Will looked at the costumed man through the car's mirror. "Ummm...I think he's trying to look at your license plate."

"Than it is time for us to go." Will got in the vehicle without any complaints, just as eager to get away from the man as Hannibal. Hannibal was going to have a long talk with Franklyn about personal boundaries *again*.

"Thanks for taking me out tonight." Will said, abruptly changing topics. "I know you didn't really want to go out."

Hannibal smiled, his Will was a very polite boy. "As long as you had a good time."

"I did." Will responded while digging around in his candy. "I always have fun with you though." He found some sort of small yellow candy and tossed it in his mouth before sending a smile towards Hannibal.

Hannibal could detect nothing but sincerity from the boy. The sense of absolute contentment in his presence was something that Hannibal couldn't recall any other person ever expressing and genuinely meaning it. Other people always had some ulterior motivation behind such phrases, whether it be social climbing or a professional recommendation. Not Will though, he meant every word. The pile of processed sugars and plastic dinosaurs suddenly seemed much more acceptable than it had been just a minute before. It was a small price to pay for brightening Will's day. Perhaps the holiday was worth the trouble if it meant that he could spend more time with Will.

Chapter End Notes

Feel free to drop me a line in the comments or on tumblr if there's something you want to chat about.
azvee.tumblr.com

Have a spooky holiday guys!

A Dull Ache

Chapter Summary

Will runs away and meets a less than savory fellow.

Chapter Notes

Who's ready for the start of the third act?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was an accident. Will looked down on the broken pieces of what had been a very expensive looking vase. He hadn't meant to bump into it's stand, he'd just tripped. Hannibal had left to get Sadie's hair cut and to run a few errands, leaving Will to watch the house. After searching the house for any secrets and coming up empty, Will decided to try and get some sleep in. He'd thought that by sleeping in a different room he could avoid his nightmares for once. Now he'd never find out.

Whenever Will had broken anything in the past, no matter it's value, his father had always flown into a rage. Now that he'd broken something that was probably worth more money than either Will or his late father had ever seen, Will was certain that Hannibal would get upset with him. Will had seen Hannibal angry before, but that anger was always directed elsewhere. The glimpses of what lay beneath the man's calm facade terrified Will. He couldn't stay here, he didn't want to see Hannibal angry. Not at him. It was best to leave while his memories of Hannibal were still happy ones.

Something was wrong. Hannibal could sense that something was off in the house the moment he stepped inside. He unhooked the leash around Sadie's neck as he called out for Will. There was no response. Curious, he got up and began inspecting each room, thinking that he might find a sleeping body in one of them. He found no body, but a smashed vase instead. A vague sense of unease started gnawing at Hannibal as he searched the rest of the house for a guilty looking boy. The unease grew when Will was no where to be found. Checking the front hall, he found that Will's shoes had disappeared as well. His unease morphed into worry as he put the pieces together and realized what had happened.

Will was gone, he'd run away from home. Any anger Hannibal might have held about the broken vase was gone before it ever had the chance to properly form. Will had vanished. He could be lost or hurt and Hannibal was unable to help him. Panic, an emotion Hannibal couldn't ever remember feeling, began to smother him. He paced the room to try and gather his thoughts. He had not been gone long, so Will could not have gotten far. He could call the police, but they moved too slow. They'd bog Hannibal down with useless questions and forms while Will froze in the cold. He needed to do something *now*. Eventually, he grabbed his cell phone and all but ran back out to his car. He could call the police as he searched.

The sun was going down and Will was getting cold. He'd spent the last few hours sitting by the river, trying to think of where he could go. He couldn't go to Dr. Bloom or Beverly, they would just take him back to Hannibal. The police would do that as well, and he couldn't face Hannibal. Will didn't want to see disappointment or anger on Hannibal's face. That would be worse than seeing what shadows hid beneath that mask Hannibal wore. Sniffling, Will stood up and was hit by a blast of cold air. He wished that he'd brought a jacket with him, but they all belonged to Hannibal. He didn't want to get in trouble for stealing anything. Even what he was wearing now had been bought by Hannibal.

Will decided that any choices about what to do now could be done where the wind wouldn't reach him. He climbed back up a small hill and started towards several old buildings. They weren't used anymore as far as Will could tell, and he liked the quiet that that the emptiness gave him. He tried several doors and found them all locked, so he headed into the alleyway instead. Another gust of wind hit Will and he thought of how warm Hannibal's house must be by now. He fell to his knees and started crying. He wanted to go home.

"Hey kid. What's wrong?" Will hadn't heard anyone approach, too caught up in his own emotions to notice much else. He turned around to see who was there. With the remaining light disappearing, he couldn't make out anything other than a vague outline of a man in a jacket at the alley's entrance.

Will wiped his eyes before replying. "I messed up and now I can't go home."

"You ran away?" Will nodded. "Well, do your parents know where you are?" Will shook his head. "Does anyone know you're out here?" Another shake. "You must be cold. Why don't you come with me, I've got a place around here with heating. You can spend the night with me." He took a step closer to Will and flashed him a toothy grin.

"I don't want to bother you." This man seemed a bit too nice, there was something wrong about his offer.

The smile stayed firmly in place as he got closer to Will and he could finally see the man's face. Brown eyes met Will's blue. "It's no problem."

This man didn't mean well, Will could see it in his eyes. "No thank you." He said while standing up.

“I’m not going to let you freeze out here.” He reached out to grab at Will’s arm. Will stepped out of his reach.

“I said no.” Will took several more steps back and found himself pinned against a wall.

“I’m not taking no for an answer.” The stranger pounced at Will, pinning him against the wall before trapping him in an iron grip.

“Let me go!” Will yelled as loud as he could while thrashing around in the man’s arms. “Get off me! Help!” A hand was clamped over Will’s mouth. Will tried to bite it and had his head knocked on the wall in retaliation. “Please…” He managed to whimper out between the hand.

“God dammit kid, just shut up! No one's gunna hear you anyways.”

“Let him go.” A familiar voice broke through the chaos in the alley, drawing the attention of both parties.

“Hannibal!” Will cried as his attacker shifted his hold on Will, opting to remove the hand from Will’s mouth and wrap it around Will’s chest and arms instead before pulling him tight against him. The man’s other hand found Will’s mouth again before he could say anything else.

“This isn’t your business old man, just go home and forget you saw any of this.” Will’s attacker snapped, trying his best to sound intimidating as he sized up this new stranger. His gaze lingered on the slim object held in his hand.

Crimson eyes flashed and met hard brown ones. “You are trying to make my son leave with you against his will. This is my business, and you will release William now.”

That seemed to make the man pause. He hadn’t expected that someone else would come along and find them, let alone the father. “He said he didn’t want to go home.”

The sound of a phone clicking shut was heard and the object in his hand was put away. Hannibal’s voice held a calm tone as he spoke. The practiced voice of a man who had talked many people down from extreme emotions was being used. “The police are already on their way, I suggest you let William go so that there is one less charge brought against you once they get here.”

“No fucking way, man!” The grip on Will tightened even more, causing him to let out a whimper. “I let him go and I’m screwed. He’s staying with me.”

“The police will respond with force if they see you taking a child with you. Let him go. Now.” Hannibal’s voice was much less calming now, his words had turned into threats.

“No, you’re going to step aside and we’re going to walk out of here together. The kid and I have gotten really close but maybe, if you ask nicely, I’ll send him back to you when we’re far away from here.”
Hannibal moved slightly to the left, placing himself directly in the path of their exit. “William is not leaving with you.” He left no room for argument.

“Yeah, he is. Unless you want to make something of this and I need to hurt my new friend.” Everyone seemed to sense that the conversation was at an end. The only way to end this standoff was with a fight.

A tense staring contest was held between the two men as each waited for the other to give them the chance to attack. Will looked around for anything that could help him get away. A stone nearby ended up providing him with the salvation he needed. With a little effort he managed to kick it and send it flying into a trash can with enough force to knock the lid off it.

The sound of the lid hitting the ground provided enough of a distraction for Will to make his move. He bit down on the arm holding him captive, causing the thug to loosen his grip just enough for him to squirm out of its grasp. Seeing his only bargaining chip making an escape, the man started moving to catch him; but found himself being thrown on the ground instead. Hannibal was on top of him, having moved with a speed that should not have been possible for a man his age.

Will backpeddled until he was pressed against the far wall and watched as the two men fought. It was clear to Will that this was not the first time Hannibal had been in a fight, a fact to be filed away for consideration later. He was fluid when he moved, unlike Will’s abductor who seemed like he was unused to anyone his own size putting up a struggle. A few well aimed shots from Hannibal to the man’s chest had him gasping for breath as he tried to get away from him. Will caught a glimpse Hannibal’s eyes as the man looked at his struggling. He was enjoying it, choosing to draw out the suffering instead of simply knocking him out. Those crimson eyes glinted in the fading sunlight again and Will felt colder than he had been just a moment ago. Those eyes were the eyes of a killer.

He was going to kill this man, this pig that had tried to take Will away from him. The man wasn’t worthy of even looking at Will, much less using him as a shield. A fist came down hard on the man’s head and he fell to the ground. Hannibal surveyed his work and tried to think of a fitting way to end the man’s life. A soft noise interrupted his thinking and he looked up to see where it was coming from.

Will was looking at him with wide eyes from his spot in the alley corner. He’d seen Hannibal’s mind plotting how to murder his attacker; and it frightened him. The urge to kill left for the moment as all his thoughts began to circle around Will. The unconscious fool would live for now. Will needed him.

“Are you alright?” Hannibal asked, worry evident in his voice and on his face. His mask seemed to have been discarded sometime during the fight, leaving all his emotions visible on the surface.

It took Will a few seconds to find his voice. “I think so. Thanks to you.” Will suddenly found himself wrapped up in a tight hug. “I’m fine, you don’t need to worry any more.”

“I know.” All Hannibal could think of was how close he had come to loosing Will, the one person in the world he cared about. He had lost Mischa and that had nearly killed him, losing Will would have finished what was left of him. He clung to Will fearing that if he let go, the boy would vanish or something else would take him away.

“Are you crying?” Will asked. Hannibal brought a hand up to his face and it came away wet. He hadn’t even realized he was crying. “Please don’t cry, I’m fine. Really!”

“Oh my dear sweet Will, trying to reassure me.” Hannibal placed his hands on the base of Will’s neck to examine him better. The boy was shaking slightly now, the shock of what happened finally hitting him. His eyes held fear, both for himself and for Hannibal.

“I’m really sorry about the vase. It was an accident, and I’m really sorry.” Hannibal felt muscles tense underneath his hand as Will prepared himself for some sort of outburst. The idea that Will was afraid of him struck Hannibal as intensely wrong.

Instead of a blow to the head, Will found himself getting wrapped in another hug. “Oh Will, my Will. Are you sure you are alright?”

“Mmhmm,” Will responded with a jerky nod. “I didn’t mean to break it.”

Hannibal ran his fingers through Will’s hair partly to calm him and partly to assure himself that Will was still there. “Hush. I do not care about the vase.”

Will seemed to relax slightly after hearing that. “How’d you find me so fast?”

Fast? It had seemed as if time had slowed to an agonizing crawl for Hannibal while he was searching for Will. “I remembered you said once that water calmed you. I hoped you would be somewhere along the riverbanks.” Hannibal chose not to tell him about the fear he had held that Will might have fallen in and drowned.

“I’m really glad you came and found me.”

“What else could I have done?”

“Let me freeze and come home on my own.” Hannibal realized that the shivers racking Will’s body might not just be from stress. He hastily took off his suit jacket and wrapped it around Will.

“Come, you have spent enough time in the cold.”

“What about him?” Will asked with a glance towards the unconscious form on the ground.

“The police can see to him.”

“But...what if he tries to get away while we’re gone? I don’t think I was the first kid he tried to take.”

Hannibal sent a glare off at the man, rage that he had the audacity to even try and take his Will away filling him again. He forced it back into the darker corners of his mind, there

would be time for proper punishment later. “He will not be getting up anytime soon. There is plenty of time to get you someplace warm.”

“Will you stay with me until the police get here?” Anxiousness tinged Will’s voice as he spoke. “I don’t want to be left alone right now.”

“Of course I will.” With the blow dealt to the man, he would not be up for hours. The police would be here much sooner to help clean up that mess. He’d much rather stay and make sure Will was safe and not going anywhere than watch a man in an alley. “I will stay with you.”

Will found himself being steered away from his would be abductor and led down the street to a car parked several blocks away. It was warmer inside and soon the heating was turned on as well. Will settled down in the seat as Hannibal sat down on the car’s floor, the need to be near Will overriding the need to look composed at all times. He kept running his hand through Will’s hair as if he needed a physical reminder that the boy was safe and in one piece. For a while, they sat in silence with each turning thoughts around in their heads.

“You looked like you were going to kill that guy.” Will mumbled after several minutes of silence. Hannibal turned to face Will and saw a pair of sharp eyes scanning his own for answers.

Hannibal decided that sharing a few truths would be better than having Will pry into matters that would only raise more troubling questions. “For a few moments, I think I was ready to kill him.”

“Why?” Will’s voice held an odd calm to it as he spoke, like he was trying to find the missing pieces that would solve the puzzle before him.

“Because you are very dear to me and once I was unable to protect someone else that was dear to me.”

“What happened?” Will asked before he could stop himself. Seeing the way Hannibal’s gaze darkened, he looked down. “I’m sorry.”

“You have nothing to be sorry for. That memory is just one that I do not like to revisit often.” Hannibal found the words coming to his lips anyway. “When I was a boy, I had a younger sister named Mischa. You remind me of her in many ways. One day, bad men came to our home and killed our parents. They did terrible things and I could do nothing to protect my sister. I was weak and she died because of that weakness.”

“I’m sorry.” Will’s voice cut through the memories clouding Hannibal’s head, reminding him that there were great portions of this story that could not be shared.

“The men eventually were brought to justice, but that did not help as much as I would have liked it too.” He still felt the slightly hollow feeling that had lingered with him since he had taken his vengeance. It was a constant dull ache that never left him. “That was why I came to the United States, to get away from bad memories. It is in part why I was able to meet you though, so something good came from it.”

“I promised myself that I would never be helpless again after that. So, when I found you in trouble, I wanted nothing more than to take the life of the man who was going to harm you.” With a bit of luck, he would still have that chance. People can disappear so easily in a city this big. All Hannibal needed was patience.

Will’s soft voice brought him back to the present once again. “I’m alright now, you don’t need to worry any more.”

“I know.” The terror that had been consuming him since coming home to an empty house slowly began to subside as he spoke those words. Will was back with him, safe and unharmed. They sat and listened to the sound of sirens gradually growing louder, and Hannibal felt perhaps a little less hollow inside.

Chapter End Notes

So, we are coming to the final act of this little tale here. With any luck, it should be done in the next few chapters. Request time is over, and I apologize if your idea didn't get in. I tried to smoosh a few different ones together here, so I'm not sure how well filled you'd call them.

If you wish to bother me or chat me up, drop off a comment here or on tumblr: azvee.tumblr.com

A New Chapter

Chapter Summary

> Will's dreams continue to get worse as he continues to chase after his forgotten memories.

Chapter Notes

> So, the dream at the start may be a bit bloody for people's tastes. I'm fine with it, but that's just me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will was back in his old home, and he was terrified. It was late and his father had come home drunk again. He was standing in the kitchen afraid to make a noise and draw attention to himself, hoping the man would stumble onto the couch and fall asleep. When the heavy footsteps and cursing got louder Will realized that he was going towards the kitchen. Before he had time to react to that news, his father appeared in the door, blocking his only exit.

He looked ready to kill Will for some unknown wrong. The shapes in the room began to morph into jagged points as the shadows began to stretch and grab at Will. He stumbled back into a corner as his father took a step towards him with his bottle raised like a club. Shadows pinned Will onto the floor and refused to let him get up to run. He tried his best to curl into a ball and waited for the first blow to hit.

It never came. Instead of hearing his own voice cry out in pain, he heard his father start to shriek. Will cautiously raised his head to see what was happening and saw his father being cut to pieces. A black figure was ripping the man apart and spraying to room with his blood. The shadows that had held Will were gone now, the red now painting the walls giving them no place to stay. He sat on the floor and watched as his father died. The yelling and cursing turned into the cries of a pig as the figure continued to tear away his flesh. Eventually, his father stopped moving and slumped to the floor. His killer stood licking the blood off his claws before turning towards Will.

The boy whimpered and hid his head, hoping that at the very least he wouldn’t see his death coming. A wet claw was placed on his shoulder, and Will could feel the creature before him changing. The claws faded away and a normal human hand appeared and gave his shoulder a reassuring squeeze before withdrawing. “It is alright now, that pig will never hurt you again.” The voice sounded so familiar. Will raised his head, not believing what he saw.

“Hannibal?” The man was soaked in blood, his father’s blood. He was looking at Will as if the boy were a frightened rabbit that might run away any second. “Did you kill him?”

He laughed and Will felt the urge to laugh with him even though he had just watched Hannibal tear his father apart. “What a silly thing to ask. You already know the answer to that question.”

“Why?”

Hannibal sent him a look that said he thought the answer was the most obvious thing in the world. “So I could keep you. You are mine, Will, and that animal wanted to keep you from me.”

Will was trembling now, the look of calm that Hannibal was giving him was the only tether he had to his sanity. He watched as Hannibal produced a cup out of thin air and gathered the blood into it. “Drink.” He held it out to Will, who took the cup and gazed at it’s dark contents.

“Why?” It seemed to be the only word left to him.

“It will bind you to me forever. Do it and I will always be there to keep you safe. You want to stay with me, correct?” Will nodded. “Then drink.”

Will lifted the cup to his lips and drank while Hannibal smiled, satisfied.

Will sat up in bed, sweat causing his shirt to stick to his skin. The coppery taste of blood was still on his tongue. His dreams were getting worse. Hannibal was now playing the role of the Ripper in his nightmares instead of his victim. Will knew that Jack wanted Will to remember what happened that night, but he didn’t know if he could do that. Will didn’t even know if he wanted to anymore, certainly not if his dreams kept getting darker and darker.

The simplest solution to the problem would be to stop trying to remember what his mind had hidden away from him. But, that would mean that other people would die. Jack had told Will that he was their best chance to finally catch the Ripper before he killed anyone else. Giving up would mean that the FBI would lose their best lead on the case. Will didn’t want to be the reason someone else got hurt, but he didn’t know if he could handle these nightmares anymore.

At a loss for what to do; Will decided to ask Hannibal. He would be able to help.

“Would it be wrong to not want to remember what happened the night my dad died?” Will asked as he watched Hannibal prepare breakfast.

Hannibal tried his best not to project how pleased he was to hear that question. He had been hoping to hear it since the first day Will had come to stay with him. “There is nothing wrong with that. In all honesty, I have been hoping you would stop trying to remember for a long time now.”

“Really? But don’t you want to catch this guy before someone else gets hurt?”

“Not if it means putting you through any more pain. Your life is worth more to me than a stranger’s life.”

Will slouched forward on his stool and rested his head in his hands. “Jack will be mad if I stop trying.”

Hannibal removed the frying pan from the flames before coming to stand in front of Will. “I do not care how Agent Crawford feels about this. You are my first and only priority when it comes to the Ripper.”

“Can you tell Jack for me? I don’t want to hear him get mad at me.”

“Of course. You have had more than enough stress put on you already.” Hannibal would gladly stand between the Agent and Will, he had been for some time now. Will didn’t know it, but Jack had been calling nearly every day since finding Ms. Buchanan in hopes of getting Will to come in for another interview. The man was very persistent in his pursuit of the Ripper. Under different circumstances, Hannibal would have found it highly amusing to watch, but for now he just wished to spare Will’s mind any more unnecessary trauma.

“Thanks.” Will responded with a tired smile. Hannibal returned the expression before sliding an omelette onto Will’s plate. The boy had been developing a loss of appetite over the past few weeks, something Hannibal was hoping would come to an end with the end of his attempts to recall his repressed memories.

“Where are you going?” Will asked as he prodded at the dish. Normally, the thought of people eating in kitchen was like a deadly sin to Hannibal, but Will could get away with breaking that rule just this once.

“I need to make a quick call.” Hannibal responded while setting a glass of orange juice next to Will’s plate. “Nothing you need worry about. Now drink your juice. It's good for you.”

“I *like* orange juice.”

“I know.” Hannibal replied before exiting the kitchen. He wanted to be able to tell Jack Crawford that he could no longer attempt to exploit Will. Hannibal felt a need to blame someone for all the grief Will was being forced to endure and the Agent was as good a target as any. He had put a responsibility that most adults would be unable to handle on a scared child. That made the man a villain in Hannibal’s eyes. Perhaps one day he would find a more fitting punishment for such actions, but for now he would settle for simply ruining the man’s weekend.

The phone rang only once before a gruff voice picked up the other end. “Did he remember anything?” Apparently Hannibal had been put on the man’s caller ID list.

“Good morning to you as well, Agent Crawford.” Hannibal civilly replied. He was going to enjoy this talk.

“Sorry. Good morning. Now, did Will tell you anything new about the Ripper?” Barely contained excitement filled Jack’s voice as he asked about the Ripper.

“Actually, Will told me he wished to stop trying to recall his repressed memories and I agree with him.”

There was a pause on the line. “What?”

“William has decided he will no longer be helping you with your case. It has put too much stress on an already fragile mind.” A small grin was forming on Hannibal’s face as he pictured the look of disbelief that was no doubt on the Agent’s face.

“We need Will’s help with this, Doctor. He could be the one person capable of putting away the Ripper.”

“Are you saying that you have so little faith in your team that you feel incapable of finding him without Will’s help?”

Jack’s voice took on a strained quality as he tried not to rise to Hannibal’s taunt. “It’s a matter of catching the Ripper before any more bodies pile up. Faith doesn’t factor into it.”

“Peilis...šakutė...taurė…” Hannibal found himself wandering back to the kitchen while Jack Crawford attempted to reason with him on the phone. Hannibal seemed to gravitate towards Will whenever he heard the boy attempting to speak Lithuanian. He found that listening to Will speak his native language was something that filled him with even more affection for the boy. It made Will that much more his son.

Will was labeling the items before him in Lithuanian when Hannibal entered the kitchen. “Apelsinas.” Will swirled his half empty glass of juice around before turning to look intensely at his omelette. “Kiaušiniai.” He finally said before taking a bite of it.

“Omletas.” Hannibal corrected. “An omelette is much different from the eggs that made it.”

“Omletas.” Will repeated, the word leaving his mouth as naturally as it flowed from Hannibal’s. Hannibal gave Will a satisfactory nod.

“Excuse me?” Jack’s voice questioned, clearly confused by the language lesson he was getting. “Are you busy right now?”

“Not at all. It is a Saturday morning; what could I possibly be doing so early?” He held up half an onion for Will to name.

“Svogūnas.”

“Taip.” Hannibal confirmed as he began putting away the excess vegetables leftover from the morning’s breakfast.

“Are you talking to Will? Can you put him on the line, I want to talk to him.”

“He is quite busy at the moment.” Will sent him a questioning look while he watched Hannibal finish tidying up. Hannibal chose to ignore it for the moment and left the kitchen once again.

“If I could just talk to him for a few minutes…” Jack implored.

“I do not think that is a good idea. Will has spent far too much time chasing after a memory that does not want to be found. It has been damaging his mental state, and I will not give you the chance to emotionally blackmail my son into continuing to harm himself for you.”

“It’s not emotional blackmail!” Crawford yelled before composing himself and continuing in a quieter voice. “It’s not. Will may be the one person who can catch the Ripper right now before anyone else gets killed. We need his help. Innocent people are in danger the longer this man is outside a cell.”

Hannibal resisted the urge to scoff at the attempt to appeal to his nonexistent moral code concerning the sheep of the world. “I realize that supporting Will’s decision is a selfish choice, but I feel that I am entitled to some selfishness where Will is concerned. You are a smart man, Agent Crawford, and I am sure that another opportunity to catch your Ripper will present itself.”

“Doctor Lecter, people are going to die.”

Using the same tactic twice when it failed the first time made it much less amusing. The man should at least make an attempt at creativity when trying to persuade him. “And their deaths will be your responsibility and not Will’s. Will should not have to suffer for the sake of the your personal crusade against the Ripper.”

“This isn’t a crusade!” Jack yelled. Hannibal sensed he had touched on a nerve. It was a good place to then their talk.

“Of course not. Have a pleasant weekend, Jack.” His tone was utterly polite as he cut off the man’s rant before hanging up the phone. It started ringing almost immediately. Hannibal let a satisfied smile form as he let the phone go to voicemail. He decided that it was a pleasant way to start the day before turning towards the kitchen once again. He had been unable to properly clean while on the phone with Crawford; he needed both hands for that.

“I don’t think being mean to Agent Crawford is a good idea.” Will stated when Hannibal entered the kitchen.

“I do not recall telling you who I was talking to.”

“You didn’t, but I could tell. You’ve wanted to tell him to leave me alone for a long time. You were really smug on the phone.”

Hannibal raised an eyebrow. “I was smug?”

“Yeah, just a bit. Your eyes were lit up and you sounded like you were happy that you’d just won something.”

“You are a very observant child.”

“Did you really want to tell him that badly? It’s still pretty early for a Saturday.”

“Jack Crawford had been asking you to do something that was harming you. A child should not be forced to take blame for the inability of an adult to do their job properly.”

“He’s trying, the Chesapeake Ripper is just better than him is all.” Will mumbled as his fork chased the last few pieces of breakfast around his plate.

Hannibal found himself oddly flattered by Will’s indirect praise. “And why would you say that?”

Will paused to gather his thoughts before slowly giving an explanation. “Well, if he weren’t he would have left behind some evidence that Jack could use. The Ripper doesn’t have a set way of killing and he doesn’t seem to know any of the people he killed. He doesn’t have a reason for doing what he does, and Jack doesn’t know how to deal with this kind of killer. I think it scares him a little.”

“An interesting idea.” Hannibal mused as he watched Will try to decipher both the Ripper and Jack. Will’s mind worked in ways that Hannibal had never seen before. It was fascinating and just another one of the many reasons that he felt blessed to have met Will.

Any further questioning on the matter was cut off as Sadie entered the kitchen to demand her morning walk. Will gulped down the last of his juice before running off with the dog. With a fond sigh, Hannibal gathered up the dishes left on the table and placed them by the sink. On a less pleasant day, he would have had Will clean up before going to play. But today was proving to be a very good one so he would allow the lapse in manners for now. Afterall, Will had just given up his quest to remember Hannibal killing his father. Today marked the start of a new chapter in both their lives.

Chapter End Notes

Will's finally got all the pieces he needs in front of him, and he's given up trying. Good news for Hannibal!

The story continues to tick down to it's end. Will it be happy? Sad? Unfinished? Who can say? If you'd like to guess or chat come drop me a line in the comments or tumblr.

Realization

Chapter Summary

Will's good day doesn't last as long as either he or Hannibal would have liked.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The day had been one of the nicest ones Will could remember. Now that he'd given up trying to recall repressed memories, it felt like a weight had been lifted off of him and he could finally relax. Even the weather had decided to stop being cold and windy for the day and let the Sun shine down upon him. He'd stayed outside with Sadie for hours enjoying the new feeling of weightlessness until Hannibal had called him back in for lunch.

After that, he'd lounged around in Hannibal's study listening to the radio as he looked at the many different books lining the shelves. He'd been idely flipping through Hannibal's books almost since he first arrived and he was nowhere close to the end. Books were an object that told you a lot about its owner, and Will had wanted to know everything he could about this strange man that watched and fed him. He skimmed the books out of habit now, not a need to analyze and learn Hannibal's intentions for him. Thinking back, Will couldn't believe he'd been so frightened of Hannibal. The man was definitely dangerous, but he was never a danger to Will.

"Have you made much progress today?" Hannibal asked when he appeared in the study. He'd learned about Will's odd hobby almost as soon as it started, but didn't take offense. Instead he seemed to find it amusing watching an eight-year-old flip through a book about neoclassical architecture in an attempt to learn more about him.

"No, not really. I'm gunna look at all of them eventually though."

Hannibal returned the book Will was holding to its proper place on the shelf before turning back to him. "I have no doubt that you will. But, I think that we need to start deboning the salmon if we want to have it tonight."

Will knew that they were having the dish because Hannibal was pleased with his decision. It was a way to show his support and approval without directly saying anything. Will had learned that the man preferred actions or gestures to words when it came to showing his position on matters like the Ripper.

Hannibal started to head towards the kitchen, confident that Will would be along shortly. He did not have to wait long before he heard a second set of footsteps joined his own. It had become a welcome and expected sound in the house.

Once in the kitchen, Hannibal set up a workstation for them. He handed off a pair of pliers to Will and carefully instructed him on how to successfully locate and remove the tiny bones. He watched Will try a few times and gave corrections before getting to work on the basting sauce.

After the pair had settled into a comfortable silence, Sadie came padding into the kitchen, still feeling a bit restless. She dropped a toy at Will's feet and waited for him to pick it up. When Will was unresponsive, she barked once to get his attention. The bark managed to disturb Will's concentration enough to cause the pliers to slip from his hands and land on the dog's head. She let out a yelp before retreating backwards.

"Oh, Sadie! I'm sorry!" Will was on his knees and looking at the dog with a face full of utter regret. "I didn't mean to hit you!"

Hannibal couldn't help but chuckle at the scene. "I doubt that she is going to hold a grudge over this."

"Do you really think so?"

"I do." He replied and turned back to his work. "It was nothing, forget it ever happened."

The world seemed to come to a stop for a moment as Will's mind began racing. There was something about those words that seemed familiar. "What did you just say?"

Sensing something was wrong, Hannibal turned and faced Will. A worried look flickered in his eyes. "Are you alright, Will? You do not look well."

"What did you just say? Tell me!" Will got to his feet and took a step away from Hannibal. Panic was filling inside him. He was wrong; he had to be wrong.

"Forget it ever happened." The words seemed to be part repetition and part a plea to stop his memory from returning. But it was too late.

Will had heard noises coming from their kitchen, and not the normal ones that happened whenever his father drank too much. These were different. Instead of thumps and curses, Will heard pleas and whimpering coming from the kitchen.

Curious, he got up and snuck as quietly as possible to the entrance. He peered through the archway that led into the kitchen hoping to steal a quick glance at his father and froze. There was another man in the kitchen with his father. He was dressed in a strange outfit that reminded Will of the plastic used to wrap up his sandwiches so they didn't go bad. The presence of this stranger wasn't what made Will freeze though; it was that this stranger had pinned his father to the table and looked like he was covered in blood. It wasn't his own either. Will wanted to run but found his legs wouldn't move. He was stuck there watching this man slice into his still conscious father. He would probably have stayed there the rest of the night, frozen in fear, if his father hadn't seen him.

He lolled his head to the side and locked eyes with Will. It looked like he tried to raise an arm already cut to pieces as he tried to moan out Will's name. A whimper escaped Will and the man paused in his work. Cold, emotionless eyes met Will's own as the two seemed to assess the situation. The man took a step towards Will, and he was finally able to move. Will stumbled back until he bumped into a chair and fell to the floor. His limbs once again ceased working as the stranger stood over Will and studied him. Will's father attempted to call out to him again.

"You son is not going to save you, Mr. Graham. I would stop straining yourself asking him to." The man's accented voice spoke in a rebuking tone without taking his eyes off Will. He knelt down in front of Will, and Will noticed for the first time that this man held a knife still.

"William, I am going to kill your father. I have no plans to kill you, but I would ask that you do not scream. That would not end well for you. Understand?" His voice had taken on a softer quality, one that was meant to calm. An uncomfortable silence filled the room as Will tried to find his voice.

"How do you know my name?" Will finally managed to ask.

"That is not important. Now, do you understand what I just told you?" Oddly enough, Will did. This man who had broken in to murder his father would not kill him unless given no other choice. Will managed a nod. This seemed to please his father's killer, since he got back to his feet and went back to work on Will's father.

Will sat on the floor, still unable to move, and watched as bits of his father were removed and packaged up. His father kept moaning and twitching until he just stopped. That sudden stop was what finally made Will began to cry.

"Hush now, it is done." The killer approached Will yet again, speaking in a calming voice. "I am going to leave now. You are not to follow me or attempt to stop me. You may call the police if you wish, but you will not tell them about what I look or sound like. You will threaten my freedom if you do so, and I will be forced to harm you. Do not tell them any details of what you have just seen. It would be best if you were to forget it ever happened." With his warning delivered, the man grabbed everything he had used to butcher Will's father and placed them in a bag before leaving with said bag.

Will didn't know how long he sat on the floor looking at the corpse of his father. He wanted to run as far away as possible, but he couldn't find the strength to stand. Will eventually settled for being able to stop crying as he tried to think of what to do now. His father's killer had mentioned calling the police. Without a better idea of what to do, Will finally got to his feet and grabbed the phone off the wall. Shaking fingers dialed the numbers.

"Hello, this is 911. What is your emergency?" A young woman's voice asked from the other end of the line. Will suddenly found himself tearing up again. "Hello?"

"There was a man in our house. He..." words didn't want to come anymore. "I think, I think he killed my dad."

The woman's voice took on a comforting quality when she heard the young voice on the phone. "Hang on, someone is going to come check on you. Can you tell us where you live?" Will couldn't form words anymore as a sob escaped him. "It'll be alright, you just stay on the line and we'll trace the call." Several moments of silence followed before the woman spoke again. "We've gotten your location, so a police officer will be right over to check on you. I'm just going to ask you a few questions. Is the man still in your house?"

"N-no."

"Okay, that's good. You're doing just fine, Sweetie. Can you tell me what this person looked like? Did you know him from somewhere?"

"No!" Will couldn't tell her what he looked like, he was told to forget. "I can't, I can't, I can't." Will dropped the phone like it had burned him and backed away into the wall. It was too much. He didn't want to remember this, he couldn't remember this. The stranger was right, Will needed to forget it ever happened. He curled into a ball and repeated 'forget' in his mind over and over until the police came and forced him to leave.

"It was you!" Tears prickled Will's eyes as he accused Hannibal. "You killed him!"

"I was hoping that you would not remember our first meeting." Hannibal replied, confirming Will's fears. He reached an arm out towards Will, trying to grab him.

"Don't touch me!" Will screamed as he jumped back, smashing a glass bowl on the floor as he tried to create some sort of barrier between himself and Hannibal. "Don't you dare try and touch me!"

The room suddenly seemed much too small for Will. It felt like the walls were closing in on him, leaving him no room to escape. His limbs became clumsy and uncooperative as he tripped over his own foot and landed on the ground. His right hand managed to catch a rather large piece of the broken glass scattered all over the floor and it tore into his flesh.

"You cut your hand. May I look at it?" Hannibal's voice seemed distorted and far away, but his words still frightened Will. He clutched his hand tight against his body and swatted away Hannibal's hand.

"I said no! Leave me alone." The room had begun to spin around Will as a feeling of dizziness grew. He attempted to take a deep breath to try and cure the dizziness, but any air that entered Will's lungs felt as if it were on fire. He sat on the floor coughing and making the feeling even worse.

"Will, you are having a panic attack." Will looked at him with wild eyes, he didn't understand what that meant. All he knew was that he was trapped with a serial killer and he couldn't breath. "You need to calm down."

"You'll kill me!" Will managed to rasp between gulps of air that burned his lungs. He was going to die and it was all his fault for not remembering sooner.

“Drink this, it will calm you down.” A glass of water was placed in Will’s hands. A part of his mind told him not to drink it, but a larger part wanted to put out the fire in his lungs. He swallowed it in one go.

“Now, I want to to concentrate on breathing.”

“Hurts.” Tears began to form while the room closed in around him.

“I know, but you need to take deep breathes. I want you to breath with me. In.” Hannibal sucked in a deep breath that Will tried to imitate. They held it for several seconds before Hannibal exhaled. “And out.”

They repeated this for several minutes until Will gradually felt the terror he felt disappear, leaving a pleasant numbness to blanket his thoughts. Everything seemed to be happening far away from him with a thick layer of cotton between him and the rest of the world. He uncurled his body and blinked lazily at Hannibal.

He saw Hannibal mouthing words that seemed to reach his ears just a little too late to be normal. “Feeling better?”

“Mmhmm…” Will couldn't really remember what had made him panic so much. He didn't feel like Hannibal being the Ripper was such a big deal. He couldn't feel much of anything right now.

“Good. Now, you cut your hand earlier, and I think it needs to be cleaned.” A pair of strong arms were lifting Will up before he had the chance to fully register the initial contact.

“Where’re we goin’?” Will asked as he watched the painting on the walls blur and morph together.

“The bathroom. We need to clean and dress your wound and I have a medical kit there.”

“Oh.” Will couldn't think of a reply to that. He didn’t want to think anymore; he wanted to stay in this comfortable numbness forever. It was better when he didn’t have to feel. He felt himself begin to drift off as they entered the bathroom.

Cold water on his arm served to wake him before Will could properly enter sleep. Hannibal was rubbing a cloth over his cut and the trail the blood had left on his arm. He watched with detachment as the red drifted down the drain and out of sight. Soon the water was gone and a fluffy dry towel pressed on his arm.

“You drugged me.” It was a statement, not an accusation. He couldn’t summon enough emotion to be upset right now.

“Yes, I did. You were going to hurt yourself if you hadn’t calmed down back in the kitchen. Now, please hold still.” A stinging sensation filled Will’s hand and he tried to flinch away. Hannibal held him steady and an alcohol soaked cloth was dabbed on his cut. The pain it caused soon faded away as the drug continued its work on Will. Gauze was wrapped around Will’s hand and he found himself being carried yet again.

Will thought he should be upset about being drugged. He tried to be as his shirt and pants were traded for pajamas, but he couldn't. He couldn't feel anything other than the growing need to sleep. Everything was soft around the edges now, no jagged points to harm or upset him remained. All he wanted right now was to surrender to the blackness that was trying to claim him. He gave in and was asleep before Hannibal finished dressing him for bed.

Hannibal was not happy. How had the day gone so poorly so quickly? The joy he had felt this morning seemed a lifetime ago. Now, he was left to deal with the fallout from Will's realization. He felt guilty about drugging the boy, but it was the only way for Hannibal to get time to think. He had to decide what to do with the problem that was Will Graham.

Chapter End Notes

So....whatever will become of poor little William now? Only one chapter left to decide his fate.

If you want to fish for clues or plea for his life, come visit in the comments or on tumblr: azvee.tumblr.com

End of a Life

Chapter Summary

Now that Will knows, Hannibal needs to decide what to do with him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It would be quick, a painless death. Will wouldn't feel a thing if he were fast enough. Hannibal tried to reason with himself as he stood over the sleeping form. He had to kill Will. If he didn't, the boy would end up telling someone what he knew. Then Hannibal would be taken away and Will would get thrown back into a world that would never really understand him. He'd be seen as part of the killings, not a victim, and the world would crucify him out of some misplaced sense of justice. Killing Will now was the best thing to do, as unpleasant as the act was. It would be far crueler to leave Will at the mercy of the media circus and vindictive strangers.

He could snap Will's neck while he slept and then create a crime scene for the FBI to search. There would be questions, but Hannibal was confident in his ability to outsmart Jack Crawford and his team. Besides, he could always hide behind the vale of a grieving parent to avoid answering any questions for a time. For once his disguise would be genuine.

Hannibal took a last look at the boy, wanting to have his final image of Will be a peaceful one. After he had committed the sleeping boy to memory, he placed a hand on the base of Will's neck. He could feel the strong steady pulse beneath his hand and did his best to ignore it. Soon he wouldn't feel it any longer, Will would be gone and he could get on with the rest of his life.

"'Annibal?" A slurred voice broke Hannibal out of his thoughts. Looking down, he saw that Will had come at least partially out of his drugged sleep. Unsure of what to do, he simply stared at the boy while he tried unsuccessfully to focus on anything. "Why'd you havta be so 'ice?" Will mumbled as his eyes closed and the drug claimed him again.

"Sleep, Will, things will be better in the morning." Hannibal was surprised to find his own throat raw as he struggled to keep his voice level.

He couldn't kill Will, he couldn't. It would be the easiest kill of a very long career, but Hannibal could not make himself do it. The sleeping form beneath him had somehow managed to find a place in his long dead heart that forbade him from taking Will's life. The hand that had previously been poised to end Will's life brushed a few stray curls of hair away from his eyes instead. He needed time to think about what to do now. He needed to cook something.

Will awoke to the smell of citrus. After fighting to get his eyes to remain open, he was greeted with a view of an assortment of elegantly carved fruits next to his bed. That had never happened before. Confused, Will attempted to sit up and inspect the items only to have the room start spinning and feel his stomach drop.

“Careful, you must move slow if you want to avoid getting sick.” Hannibal’s voice echoed somewhere in the room as a pair of strong hands forced him to lie back down. Will heard himself start to whimper for some reason. “I am not going to hurt you, Will. Please stay calm, you are not in any danger. Just relax and let the drug wear off.”

Drug? Will’s head felt like it had been filled with cotton. Why was Hannibal talking about drugs? Yesterday’s revelation hit him, making him bolt upright. “It was you.”

“Yes, it was. Now, please eat something.”

“No.”

Hannibal sighed as if Will was being entirely unreasonable about this. “I have not tampered with the fruit, Will. Eating some will speed the drugs release.”

“You first.”

“Very well.” Hannibal replied before spearing a piece of pineapple and eating it. “Nothing had been done to the fruit.”

Will tried his best to glare at Hannibal, but the room was still moving and he found himself trying not to vomit. Hannibal seemed to sense this and placed a few grapes in Will’s hand. “This will help with the dizziness you are feeling.”

Will reluctantly popped a grape into his mouth and chewed, being sick to his stomach wouldn’t help anyone. He ate a few more and waited until his stomach had settled somewhat before asking the question that was weighing on his mind. “So, you really are the Chesapeake Ripper?”

“Yes.”

Will felt his heart sink at the confession. He had already known, but the confirmation still hurt. “Why would you kill all those innocent people?”

“They were not innocent.” Hannibal stated calmly.

“But, they hadn’t done anything wrong…”

“So was it right for your father to beat you for things beyond your control?”

“Ms. Buchanan didn’t beat me.” Will replied, ignoring the question.

“She was a callous woman whose life had been founded on casual cruelties to others. Do you truly miss her belittling comments?” Will didn’t answer. “She was a person that was cruel to all those around her. The world is full of people that should not be in it.”

“Like the men that killed your sister?” Will asked, Hannibal’s childhood story suddenly seemed much darker than it had been when originally told.

“Yes,” Hannibal replied after a pause. His voice grew colder and colder as he continued. “And the man that tried to abduct you. A jail cell is all that is keeping that man safe from me. How many children do you imagine he had taken before you? Should he be allowed to hurt more people?”

“Stop it! Killing people isn’t right!” Will cried. “You can’t just kill people, it’s wrong!”

A frown marred Hannibal’s face. “Says who? The corrupt government or police forces that are bribed and swayed by others to allow evil men to remain free?”

“Please stop it…”

“Will, I know you are a smart boy. You must know that what I am saying makes sense. The law will tell you killing is wrong; but we both know that there are people that should not live.”

“So, are you going to kill me?” The question came out as a half heard whisper.

Hannibal’s facial expression softened immediately. He reached out a hand to comfort Will, but stopped when he saw the boy flinch away from him. “I could never kill you, Will. Of all the people I have met, no one deserves to live more than you do. I could never take you from this world.”

Will studied Hannibal’s face for a long time before responding. “I believe you.” An uncomfortable silence stretched between the pair as Will continued to look for any sign of insincerity on Hannibal’s face. He either didn’t find any or gave up searching. Will moved on to the next question he needed to ask instead. “What are you going to do now?”

“That depends on you, William. What do you wish me to do?”

“What do you mean?” That didn’t make any sense to Will. Hannibal always had a plan, no matter what. He would have one in place right now as well.

“Tell me what you want to happen now. Whatever you ask of me, I will do my best to grant it.”

“But you won’t stop killing.” It was a statement, not a question.

“No,” Hannibal said with a shake of his head. “That is one thing I cannot do. I cannot look at this world and see such horrible people inhabit it without acting.”

“Can I ask you something first?”

“I believe you just did. But, you may ask me as many questions as you need.”

Will chose to ignore Hannibal’s attempt at humor. Today was not a day for it. “Was this all just so I would be with you? Why didn’t you just kidnap me?”

“That would never have worked as anything more than a temporary solution. The authorities would not have stopped searching for any trace of you, and I think you would find a way to alert someone to your predicament if I had taken you. I had planned to be placed in charge of you since the first ideas of a plan began to form in my head.”

“Why did decide to you kill my father and not me that night? I could have gotten you caught, that couldn't have been part of your plan. The safe choice would have been to kill me.”

Hannibal’s voice was still eternally calm, as if talking about murder were the most mundane thing in the word. “I killed your father because he was a vile creature, but you had done nothing wrong. I would never have been able to kill you, Will. At first, it was simply because you reminded me of my sister; but now, you are much too dear to me for any harm to come to you.”

“So you killed my dad because he hurt me?”

“Yes.”

That wasn’t the answer Will wanted to hear. It only confused things even more for him. “That’s not right.”

“Would you rather have him alive and still beating you?” Hannibal asked. Will didn’t respond. “Would you? Answer the question, Will.”

“No.” Will mumbled and shrunk in on himself.

“So you are glad that I killed your father.”

He curled further into himself. “I didn’t say that.”

“But you just told me you prefer him dead rather than living.”

“That’s not fair.”

“What is not fair is that horrible people walk the earth harming the innocent, like you. The people I take from this world are ones that don’t belong in it. It may not the right thing by the world’s standards, but what I do helps it. I make the world a better place for the good by removing the bad.”

Will couldn’t stay here and listen to this any more, he needed to move and think. “I don’t want to eat the rest of this.” He grabbed the bowl still full of fruit and took off with shaky legs towards the kitchen. Hannibal followed a few steps behind, watching.

Hannibal saw Will's exit as a classic avoidance technique. But, neither that fact or that Will was about to dispose of a perfectly good meal bothered the man. He could tell that Will was no longer upset about Hannibal being the Ripper, but that what he said made sense.

Will's natural empathy let him see why what Hannibal did was right, and that scared him. But Hannibal was confident that with just a little more time he could convince Will to keep quiet about his secret. He would understand that Hannibal was trying to create a better world for him.

Will's legs gave out on him in the dining room. As the last of the drugs left Will, his body was left feeling weak and cold. In another hour, everything would be normal again. Hannibal offered to help the boy finish the trip to the kitchen, but he refused and sat in a chair to wait out the drug. He didn't refuse the blanket offered when he started to shiver.

"This is awful." He grumbled while pulling the blanket tighter around him. "It's even worse than a cold."

Hannibal sent him a sympathetic look. "I am truly sorry about drugging you, Will. I was worried you were going to cause more harm to yourself if I did not do something."

Will looked at the bandage still covering most of his right hand. The cut was quite impressive. "Thanks for helping, I guess."

"All I have ever tried to do is help you."

"You've got a weird way of helping."

Hannibal wanted to keep talking, but the sound of the doorbell being rung filled the room. Hannibal didn't have any patients or guests coming over today. His mood soured when he guessed who else might be calling on him.

"I will be back in a moment, are you going to be alright alone?" Hannibal asked Will in a level voice. He didn't want to reveal who was most likely waiting to barge into the house.

"I'm not going to call the cops if that's what you're worried about." Will's voice was bitter and slightly sarcastic, but also sincere when he spoke. It said volumes about where he stood on the Ripper issue and helped lift Hannibal's spirit slightly.

"It would be within your rights to do so, but I appreciate that you choose not to." With that, Hannibal headed to the door to greet Agent Jack Crawford.

Jack Crawford could not have picked a worse time to show up. Hannibal had just begun to make progress with Will. The sudden appearance of the man would make all of the morals the world had taught him come rushing back. If he managed to speak to Will, than Hannibal's secret would come out due to guilt if nothing else.

The man needed to leave. It was with that thought in mind that Hannibal opened the door to talk with a disgruntled looking Jack Crawford. He had not taken yesterday's phone call well it would seem.

"Goodmorning, Doctor Lecter. May I speak to Will?" His voice did not match the words he spoke. Everything about him seemed like a spring that had been pulled too far back and made all his words and actions stiff and tight. It wouldn't take much to make the man snap. On any other day, Hannibal would have seen this as the start of a great game, but today he had more important things to do.

"Will is not available, Agent Crawford," He stated in a level voice. "I suggest you go home." The latter half of the sentence was more of a command than a suggestion. Jack seemed unwilling to obey though, and the two men stared each other down.

"I want him to leave!" Will yelled from inside after hearing who was at the door.

Jack brushed past Hannibal and started down the hall, ignoring the man's protests about violating their home. "I only want to talk for a few minutes, Will."

"No, go away!"

"I'm not leaving until we have a talk." Jack entered the dining room and froze momentarily when he saw Will huddled up and shaking. "Are you alright?" Jack asked while reaching a hand out towards Will.

"Please just leave me alone!" Will begged as he recoiled from Jack's touch and pulled the blanket over his head.

"Will, what's wrong?"

Panic laced Will's words as he hid within the blanket. "Don't ask me to tell! Just go away!"

"Ask you to tell what?" Jack asked, clearly at a loss for what to do. "Do you need help?"

"I don't want to tell you about the Ripper!"

"The Ripper? Did you remember something? We can keep you safe from whoever it is. No one will hurt you, Will."

Jack meant to say more, but suddenly found a knife buried in his side. "I believe Will asked that you leave, Agent Crawford. Staying here uninvited was very rude." Hannibal's voice whispered in his ear while his free hand removed the Agent's gun. He twisted the knife before removing it and shoving the man to the floor.

"Doctor Lecter?" Wide, disbelieving eyes looked up at him as Jack put the pieces together in his mind.

"Yes, I am the Chesapeake Ripper." He declared with a malicious grin. "All these months you were searching for a man standing right next to you."

Will stared at the blood that began to pour out of Jack Crawford's slumped form. The image was much too similar to what had happened to his father for Will to process what was happening. He stood up to try and offer help, but froze a moment later. He didn't know what to do now.

"I'm sorry." He mumbled as his legs gave out and he fell to the floor. He found himself unable to look away from the red seeping through the man's jacket despite his attempts to stop the bleeding. Everything seemed to be shutting down in Will's mind the longer he stared at the red. "I'm sorry. Sorrysorrysorrysor-"

A pair of strong arms pulled Will's head away from the direction of the blood and towards Hannibal's face instead. He spoke to Will in a slow voice. "William, I had hoped to give you more time to think, but it appears we no longer have that luxury. I must go now. Do you want to come with me?"

"I don't know…" Hannibal's voice was so calm and comforting, but he had just stabbed a man. Nothing made sense anymore. Tears formed as the situation continued to wear him down.

Hannibal's steady voice cut through the confusion and Will latched onto it like a lifeline. "Do you want me to leave you?"

"I…" The tears Will was holding back finally broke through as he let out a sob. He clung to Hannibal like he was the only thing keeping him from vanishing. If he let go, the man would leave and Will would have no one. "Please don't leave me! I can't be left alone again! Please." He started shaking as the rest of his words dissolved into repeating 'please' for some unknown wish.

"Do you want to come with me?" Hannibal asked the trembling child. He needed to know for sure before he did anything. Will's head nodded, or attempted to do so while still being buried in Hannibal's jacket. Hannibal was struck with an odd mixture of joy and melancholy. Will had chosen to stay with him, which was the most wonderful gift that could be given to him. But, he knew what Hannibal did in the shadows now. Will would never look at him with the look of awe and adoration that used to adorn his face when he looked at Hannibal. That innocent part of the boy was gone now, torn away from Hannibal in the most violent way.

But, that was a loss he could live with. The total loss of Will would have been one that Hannibal might have never recovered from. "Very well than; I believe it is time for us to go." Hannibal scooped the crying child up into his arms and let the boy wrap his arms around his neck. He felt tears and mucus on his neck, but he didn't care. Will needed what little comfort he could get out of the situation. "Hush now, I have you. Nothing will take you from me."

"We'll find you." Hannibal had almost forgotten about the man bleeding out on his floor. "There's no where in the world you can go that we won't find you."

"An eight-year-old child solved the Ripper's case for you. I do not fear whatever attempts at catching me that you wish to use. Now, we really must be on our way." He placed the Agent's phone on the opposite end of the long dining table. "I would suggest you call for an ambulance soon. A wound like that can be deadly."

The ride in Hannibal's car was a long one. Will had refused to let go of Hannibal at first, so the man decided to undo the jacket he usually wore and gave it to Will. The child had curled around it and seemed to be using it as a security blanket. Hannibal wanted to start a conversation with Will or put on some classical music, but he didn't wish to startle the child.

After failing to kill Will, he had managed to secure two tickets for himself and Will on a private airline under a false identity last night. He'd feared that today might end with him fleeing the country, and it seemed that his planning had not been in vain after all. His plan was to get to Europe and drive across several nations to their new home, wherever that may be. Italy was looking like a good choice.

"Hey, Hannibal?" A quiet voice asked from within his jacket.

"Yes, Will?"

"Can we find a new house with a lawn? That way, maybe we can come get Sadie one day?" The voice was soft and strained with emotion struggling to stay in check. He didn't look at Hannibal when he spoke.

"Whatever you want, we will get." Hannibal meant it too. Will would be given whatever he wished if it would help bring a smile back to his face. "Just rest for now, there is a long journey ahead of us."

The rest of the ride was filled with silence as both of the car's occupants thought about what the future held now. Hannibal chose to view the future in an optimistic light. He had no doubt that, if given time, Will would come around to his way of thinking and would no longer question his late night activities. The boy was already conflicted morally about something he was completely against just a few hours ago. One day he would look at what Hannibal did and understand. That thought made him feel much better about the forced relocation as he led Will into the airport.

Will was surprisingly well behaved in the airport, something Hannibal counted as a silent blessing. He was able to pass off any odd behavior by the child as a fear of flying. Many of the employees of the company went out of their way to make the process of getting onboard as quick and painless as possible after hearing about poor Will's fear.

Hannibal tried to feel disappointed about being forced to leave his life in Baltimore behind, but he couldn't. The luxuries and social status he had built up for him had been taken from him a just a few moments. All he had worked for was gone, yet he couldn't feel any remorse for his lost life. He felt that as long as Will stayed by his side, the best part of that life was still with him. For now, just having Will near was enough to lift his spirit. He held onto the fact that Will had chosen to go with him, even knowing what Hannibal was, as a sign that Will would be happy once again someday.

Will kept his eyes glued to the window as he watched the only life he'd even know fade away into the clouds. "I've never flown in a plane before." Tears started to form again as the city was blotted out by the clouds. "What's going to happen to me now?"

Hannibal felt as if someone had punched him when he heard Will's question. He sounded so lost and broken. Despite his earlier restraint, Hannibal found himself pulling Will close to him. "I will take care of you. You will never want for anything."

"Really?" That quiet, broken voice asked.

"If you ask for the Moon itself, I would find a way to give it to you."

"I don't want the Moon, I just want things to be normal again."

"They will be one day."

"Promise?"

"Promise." Things would return to normal for Will and he would be happy again. Hannibal would make it happen. Hannibal would move Heaven and Earth to make Will happy. He had done too much damage to his Will to ever allow the world or anyone on it to hurt him ever again. Anyone that tried to harm Will in any way would be dealt with swiftly and without mercy. The boy would be kept safe from every evil in the world. Will would be safe and happy, Hannibal would make sure of it.

That was a father's job after all.

Chapter End Notes

And we're done! My first chapter story is finished just in time for finals to start up.

If you want to offer any comments/tips on how to improve my writing, or just want to say hi, feel free to drop me a line in the comments or on tumblr: azvee.tumblr.com

End Notes

Why do I suddenly find all these nice prompts to fill? I have college stuff to do, and this is not helping!

Original prompt: http://hannibalkink.dreamwidth.org/2676.html?thread=5510260

If you want to chat, I'm on tumblr : azvee.tumblr.com

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!